

2012 SOCIAL INNOVATION FUND REVIEW HANDBOOK



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1.0

INTRODUCTION**Welcome to the 2012 Social Innovation Fund External Review Handbook**

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) has developed this Handbook and other training materials to prepare you for your role as a Review Participant in the 2012 Social Innovation Fund (SIF) Grant Application Review Process (GARP). As part of your training curriculum, this Handbook serves as your central reference for preparing for your expert review activities.

CNCS has developed online Orientation Sessions that complement particular sections in this Handbook to ensure that you are fully prepared for your expert review experience. It is recommended that you first read through the sections of the Handbook, and then access the corresponding Orientations Sessions when indicated in the text. These Sessions include:

- ◆ Understanding the Social Innovation Fund Grant Application Review
- ◆ Reviewing the 2012 Social Innovation Fund Applications
- ◆ Applying the 2012 Social Innovation Fund Selection Criteria.

NOTE: All Review Participants (new and experienced) are expected to familiarize themselves with all review material and participate in the orientation sessions.

The final Orientation Session will be conducted live (*Understanding the Social Innovation Fund Selection Criteria*) to provide an opportunity for questions. There will be a separate live orientation session for each of the review types: Program and Evaluation. All Orientation Sessions are required; therefore a recording of each session is available to Review Participants to ensure access and full orientation.

All training and reference materials will be available on the **CNCS Reviewer Resource webpage** (<http://www.nationalservice.gov/egrants/sifpeerreview/instructions.asp>) where Review Participants will access key forms in the appropriate electronic format (Word or PDF). There are two types of forms for your attention: Administrative and Review Forms.

Administrative forms include Conflict of Interest (COI) and Participation Agreements. These forms are available as PDFs to download, complete (sign), and submit via fax or email.

Review Forms include the Individual Reviewer Worksheet (IRW) and Panel Discussion Report (PDR). These forms are provided in a *Word* format and are available as *Word* documents to enable Review Participants to download and use the forms to prepare their draft outside of eGrants. Reviewers conclude the review by recording their final review results in their IRWs and either pasting them into eGrants if you are a Program Reviewer or emailing them to your Panel Coordinator if you are an Evaluation Reviewer.

After reading this Handbook and reviewing the required orientation sessions, you will understand:

- The steps of the External Review process for the 2012 Social Innovation Fund competition
- The expectations for your role and other Review Participants in the expert review process
- The schedule and requirements for participation in the External Review process
- The SIF Selection Criteria that are considered in the expert review
- How to evaluate applications according to the SIF Selection Criteria
- How to write meaningful, evaluative comments for applications
- The importance of fairness and equity in the Review, and how you fit into that responsibility
- How to serve as a productive member in your review panel
- How to participate effectively in panel discussions

This Handbook is structured as follows:

CNCS Grant Application Review Process

- The Life Cycle of Competitive Grants: overview of CNCS' competitive grant life cycle and the context for the expert review of applications
- The Grant Application Review Process: description of CNCS' application review process and expectations of Review Participants
 - The External Review Process
 - Roles and Responsibilities in External Review

Preparing for the 2012 Social Innovation Fund Grant Application Review

Overall guidance regarding initial steps and basic planning information

- Reviewer Timeline and Milestones
- Key Review Forms
- Conflict of Interest, Bias, and Confidentiality

Reviewing the 2012 Social Innovation Fund Applications

Comprehensive guidance on participating in the review process as a Reviewer

- Conducting the Individual Reviews
 - The SIF Selection Criteria
- Participating in the panel discussions
- Finalizing the Individual Reviewer Forms
- Completing the Close Out Process

Appendices are provided that include essential reference tools, including specific SIF materials, copies of all review-related forms, and additional guidance and tips.

NOTE: If you have any questions or suggestions about this Handbook or any of the training materials, please email PeerReviewers@cns.gov. Emails to this address are received by GARP support staff and every effort is made to respond within one business day.

2.0

CNCS GRANT APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

CNCS is a federal agency created to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering; it has become the nation's largest grant-making agency supporting national and community service programs and volunteerism. CNCS engages more than five million Americans who volunteer to meet local needs and improve communities through a wide array of service opportunities. Additional information on CNCS and its programs is available online at www.nationalservice.gov.

2.1 THE CNCS GRANT MAKING PROCESS

CNCS has established a multi-step grant-making process from the appropriation of funds and awarding grants, through monitoring activities, to close out. A summary of this process is presented in Figure 1, *The Life Cycle of Competitive Grants*. A description of each step and more specifics about CNCS grant-making process is available at:

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/cnsggrantreviewandselectionprocessdescription.pdf>.

Figure 1: The Life Cycle of Competitive Grants



For the Social Innovation Fund competitions: CNCS utilizes a multi-stage review process to assess applications, which includes the involvement of External Reviewers (Reviewers) and CNCS (Internal) Staff. An External Review, consisting of individual reviews and panel discussions, is conducted for each eligible application. Based on the results from the External Review, an Internal Staff Review is conducted for applications that meet the criteria to advance in the review process and is further detailed in subsequent sections of this Handbook and the corresponding orientation sessions. The **Assess Applications** step is where you, as a Reviewer, are contributing to CNCS grant process.

Required Training:
 “Understanding the Social
 Innovation Fund Grant
 Application Review”

2.2 THE GRANT APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

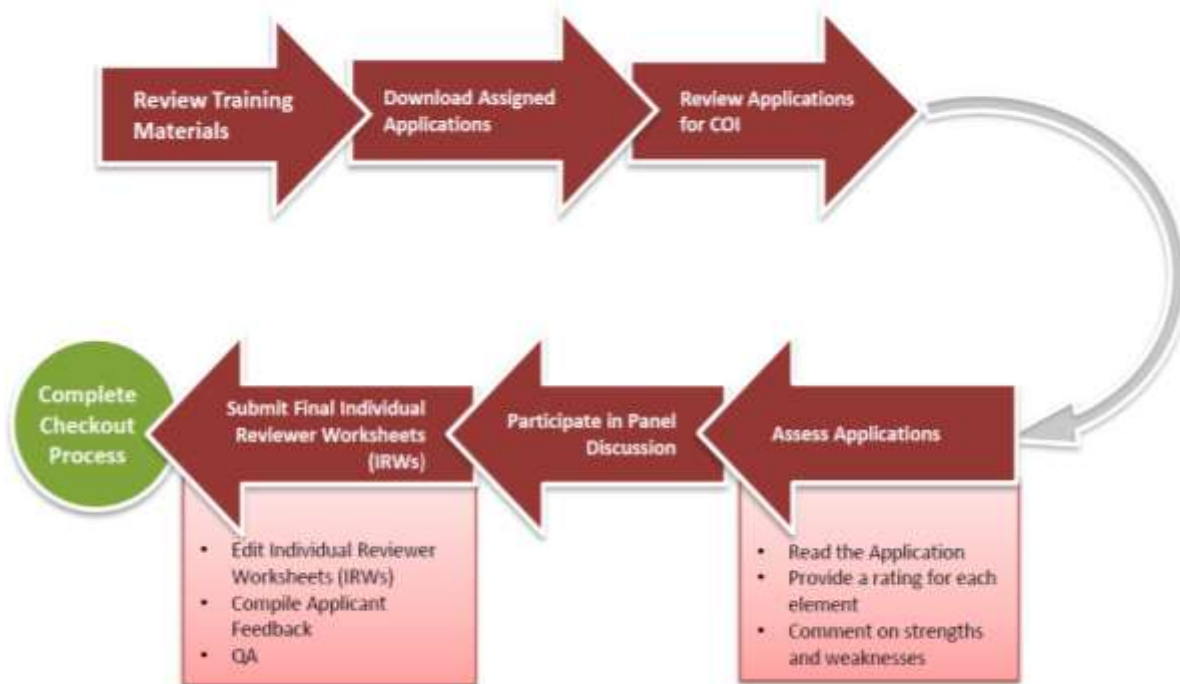
2.2.1 The External Review Process

The use of Reviewers in evaluating grant applications submitted to CNCS for funding is established in CNCS' statute and regulations. This is achieved through the External Review process. The purpose of this review process is to identify the highest-quality applications based on the Selection Criteria published in the Notice of Federal Funding Availability (*Notice*) that are established in CNCS regulations and applicable statutes. CNCS carefully chooses Review Participants for their expertise and ability to objectively assess the quality of proposed projects. Review Participants are not making judgments or determinations on whether applications should be funded, but are providing an assessment of the quality of particular aspects of the applications for CNCS. CNCS Staff will make all funding decisions and utilize expert review results as input to help inform those decisions.

NOTE: Review Participants are **NOT** making judgments or determinations on whether applications should be *funded* but are providing an **assessment of the quality** of particular aspects of the applications for CNCS.

CNCS has developed a process for conducting the External Review of grant applications, which is depicted in Figure 2, *The External Review Process*. Each step is briefly described below. An in-depth discussion of these steps and your activities in the expert review process is provided in subsequent sections of this Handbook.

Figure 2: The External Review Process



- ◆ **Review Participant Training and Orientation Materials:** All Review Participants are required to review the training materials including this Handbook and a series of Orientation Sessions. This ensures that Review Participants are fully prepared for their role, in order to provide a meaningful review and standardized assessment of the applications.
- ◆ **Download Assigned Applications:** A set of applications is assigned to each panel and made available to Program Reviewers by download through eGrants, the Web-based system used by

CNCS to support grant management and competitions. Evaluation Reviewers will have applications sent to you. Each panel only has access to its assigned applications.

- ◆ **Review Applications for Conflicts of Interest (COI):** The first step in beginning your review of an application is to determine if there are any potential conflicts of interest. This must take place within the first day of receiving panel assignments, prior to delving into the technical content of the application in case recusals or reassignments are necessary.
- ◆ **Assess Applications:** Each Reviewer conducts a detailed individual review of each assigned application according to the Selection Criteria specified by CNCS. The individual review includes reading the application, providing a rating for each element, and commenting on strengths and weaknesses. Each Reviewer prepares a draft Individual Reviewer Worksheet (IRW) documenting his/her assessment of each application and submits the IRW to the Panel Coordinator and Program Officer Liaison for review and feedback. Reviewers consider the feedback and make necessary modifications to revise the draft IRW in preparation for the panel discussions. After the panel discussions, Reviewers may return to their IRWs to amend their comments and ratings to ensure that they reflect their conclusive assessment (*See Edit IRWs*).
- ◆ **Participate in Panel Discussion:** Reviewers participate in a discussion with their panel for each assigned application to share thoughts and discuss their assessments. Each panel has an assigned Panel Coordinator who will help prepare the Reviewers for the discussions, facilitate the discussions, and take relevant notes of the discussion (including agreement and disagreement), to prepare a Panel Discussion Report (PDR) for each application. While consensus is not a requirement of the panel discussion, Reviewers are asked to listen and consider the assessments and findings of fellow panel members. The Panel Coordinator will guide the panel to discuss only the relevant aspects of the application in their assessment, consider the areas of agreement and disagreement, and ensure that each Reviewer is addressing only relevant aspects of the application in his/her assessment.
- ◆ **Edit IRWs:** After the Panel Discussion, Reviewers have the opportunity to return to their IRWs to amend their comments and ratings to ensure that they reflect their conclusive assessment.
- ◆ **Compile Applicant Feedback Summary:** Each Reviewer will complete the Applicant Feedback Summary section and provide factual and constructive summary comments on his/her assessment of the applications.
 - Applicant Feedback Summary should not contain any direct suggestions or recommendations for improvement, and should only address the quality of the information that was in the application (as required by the Selection Criteria).
 - Additionally, the summary comments for applicant feedback should come solely from a sampling of the comments in previous sections of the IRW—the feedback must focus on the most relevant comments from the IRW—the Strengths and Weaknesses that had the greatest impact on the selected Rating. It should not be new information or comments that did not respond to the Selection Criteria.
- ◆ **Finalize and Submit IRWs:** Reviewers will re-examine their IRWs and proofread for grammar and other elements, before submitting the IRW; Program Reviewers will submit their IRWs in eGrants, and Evaluation Reviewers will submit their IRWs to their Panel Coordinators.
- ◆ **Complete Close Out Process:** Each Review Participant will complete a close out process including: disposing of confidential review materials properly, providing feedback in the Review

High Quality IRWs SHOULD:

- Only include comments that address SIF Selection Criteria
- Reflect writing that is clear and concise
- Ensure comments do not contradict each other
- Ensure comments are aligned with and support the rating selection for each section.
- Be free of spelling and grammar errors
- Contain no inflammatory language
- Include relevant Applicant Feedback Summary comments

Process Evaluation, and ensuring that you have satisfied all of the review requirements to receive your honorarium payment.

2.2.2 Roles and Responsibilities

There are several important roles in the review process, and the general responsibilities, along with expectations and interactions are listed below. Please note that this Handbook provides detailed guidance on only the Reviewer role; a separate Panel Coordinator supplement is provided for Panel Coordinators.

Reviewer

Reviewers evaluate applications according to the published Selection Criteria. Primary responsibilities include: completing high-quality IRWs, participating in panel discussions, and finalizing the assessment of an application on the IRWs after the panel discussion. There will be up to five Reviewers assigned to each panel.

Reviewers interact primarily with Panel Coordinators and are expected to be consistently responsive to their requests.

In addition to reviewing training and background materials, reporting any actual or potential conflict of interest, and complying with confidentiality expectations, Reviewers are held to a standard of producing **high quality IRWs**.

Panel Coordinator (PC)

Each panel will have a Panel Coordinator whose primary responsibilities are to guide, support and monitor the work of the Reviewers assigned to his/her panel; manage panel logistics; provide feedback to Reviewers on their IRWs; and facilitate the panel discussions. The Panel Coordinator works in several capacities to ensure that Reviewers complete a thorough, non-biased review that aligns with the Selection Criteria. For each application, the Panel Coordinator should complete a Panel Discussion Report (PDR), and submit (via email to Innovations@cns.gov) to the Program Officer Liaison after each discussion.

As Review Participants, Panel Coordinators are expected to: review training and background materials, report any actual or potential conflicts of interest and comply with confidentiality expectations.

They also serve as the first point of contact by both their Reviewers and CNCS Staff regarding any concerns, or information for the panel—essentially serving as the primary liaison or link between CNCS Staff and the panel. Panel Coordinators interact with Reviewers and help resolve any conflicts among the panel members. If any panel anomalies arise, the Panel Coordinator should immediately notify the GARP Liaison who will determine next steps.

Grant Application Review Process (GARP) Liaison

Each panel will be assigned a GARP Liaison who will answer all process-related questions and provide all administrative and logistic support to the panel. The GARP Liaison can provide assistance with obtaining grant applications and administrative forms (electronic versions), access to review resources, reminders throughout the process, and assistance with navigating in eGrants screens. The GARP Liaison is the point of contact (after the Panel Coordinator) for any immediate needs with review materials or any roadblocks encountered in participating in the review and completing the review process.

Program Officer Liaison (POL)

Each panel will be assigned a Program Officer Liaison from CNCS whose main responsibility is to serve as a resource to the panel on programmatic elements. Interactions with the POL are primarily done through the Panel Coordinator. The POL can provide clarification or guidance on an aspect of the Selection Criteria that panel members may not understand, and can be consulted to clarify aspects of the SIF Selection Criteria.

The POL will also be the audience for reviewing the Panel Discussion Reports and IRWs from Panel Coordinators and follow up (as needed) with Panel Coordinators on areas that the panel may need to revisit, in panel discussions or assessments. All correspondence with POLs should be sent from Innovations@cns.gov and **include your Panel # in the Subject**.

Additional expectations for POL interactions will be provided to Panel Coordinators during the Panel Coordinator Check-In calls.

3.0 PREPARING FOR THE 2012 SOCIAL INNOVATION FUND GRANT APPLICATION REVIEW

Prior to commencing the grant application review process, you must complete the training requirements and become familiar with key background material. The Notice of Federal Funding Availability (*Notice*) for the Social Innovation Fund governs the 2012 Social Innovation Fund grant competition (see Appendix A, *Notice of Federal Funding Availability*). This document details the requirements and Selection Criteria that applicants use to write their applications, and that you will use to evaluate the applications. Your comprehensive understanding of these requirements and criteria documents is critical to a fair, successful and objective review.

In addition to reviewing training resources and background material, Review Participants must address Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality considerations. These topics are discussed in this section, as well as the key review forms and the Reviewer timeline.

3.1 REVIEWER TIMELINE AND MILESTONES

The Expert review process (excluding training sessions and other preliminary steps) spans 19 days. The table below specifies the general timeline and key milestones for Reviewers. Your Panel Coordinator will provide specific dates and details for your panel.

Table 1: Social Innovation Fund 2012 Timeline and Milestones for Reviewers

Date	Tasks	Milestones
Thursday 4/12/2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program Reviewers will download applications from eGrants Evaluation Reviewers will have their applications sent to them Review all applications for Conflicts of Interest (COI) Download COI Statement and Reviewer Participant Agreement (RPA) from the webpage http://www.nationalservice.gov/egrants/sifpeerreview/instructions.asp 	
Friday 4/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit COI Statement and RPA to CNCS Read first set of applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit COI Form and Reviewer Participant Agreement
Saturday-Monday 4/14-4/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write draft IRWs for first set of applications and notify Panel Coordinator 	
Tuesday 4/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive Panel Coordinator feedback on draft IRWs Prepare for Panel Discussion on first set of applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete draft IRWs for first set
Wednesday 4/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in Panel Discussion of first set of applications Revise IRWs to reflect any changes in assessment after Panel Discussion Send first set of IRWs to POL for review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Panel Discussion of first set
Thursday-Saturday 4/19-4/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make revisions to first set of IRWs based on POL feedback, When approved by PC, Program Reviewers will paste their IRWs into eGrants Evaluation Reviewers will send a final copy to their PC Read second set of applications 	
Sunday-Monday 4/22-4/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write draft IRWs for second set of applications and send to Panel Coordinator Receive Panel Coordinator feedback on draft IRWs 	
Tuesday 4/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise draft IRWs in advance of Panel Discussion Prepare for Panel Discussion on second set of applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete draft IRWs for second set
Wednesday 4/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in Panel Discussion of second set of applications Revise IRWs to reflect any changes in assessment after Panel Discussion Send second set of IRWs to POL for review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Panel Discussion of second set

Date	Tasks	Milestones
Thursday-Sunday 4/26-4/29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make revisions to second set of IRWs based on POL feedback, When approved by PC, Program Reviewers will paste their IRWs into eGrants Evaluation Reviewers will send a final copy to their PC Finalize all IRWs in eGrants and notify Panel Coordinator 	
Monday 4/30/2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete check out process 	

3.2 KEY REVIEW FORMS

Review Participants will be involved in the development of three documents that will document review results. A copy of each form is available on CNCS Reviewer Resource Web page. (<http://www.nationalservice.gov/egrants/sifpeerreview/instructions.asp>)

- The Individual Reviewer Worksheet, first completed in a Word document by Reviewers and sent to the Panel Coordinator and Program Officer Liaison for feedback; final version is posted in eGrants by Program Reviewers or sent to the Panel Coordinator by Evaluation Reviewers, after panel discussion.
- The Panel Discussion Report, completed by the Panel Coordinator during the panel discussions; sent to Program Officer Liaison after the discussion.
- The Applicant Feedback Summary Report, generated by CNCS after the review ends, based on summary comments captured from the Reviewers' IRWs.

Table 2: Synopsis of Review Forms

	Individual Reviewer Worksheet	Panel Discussion Report	Applicant Feedback Report
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To document a Reviewer's individual assessment of one application To provide useful feedback to CNCS on the application 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To document the panel's discussion of one application 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide feedback to the applicant regarding salient aspects of their application
Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Panel Coordinator Corporation staff Public (potentially subject to FOIA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporation staff, primarily the POL and GARP Liaison 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant applicants Public (forms for all selected applications will be posted online)
Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies strengths and weaknesses in an application Used by CNCS to assist in decision-making process Used by CNCS to develop the Applicant Feedback Report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summarizes the areas of agreement and disagreement Describes any Panel Coordinator observations Used by CNCS to assist in decision-making process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used by applicants for insight on their proposal to assist in development of future applications
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comments and Ratings on each Program Design element Selected comments for Applicant Feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Narrative comments on discussion points Panel Coordinator notes and observations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compiled comments from the Applicant Feedback section of each Reviewer's IRW

3.3 ENSURING EQUITABLE REVIEWS

An essential goal of the CNCS review process is ensuring that each grant application submitted for funding consideration is considered and evaluated based on a fair and equitable process in the interest of transparency and integrity of the full grant process.

As you review the applications, you may notice a high level of diversity among SIF proposals. This is common and is encouraged and embraced in the SIF program, as SIF programs are not seen as

standard, or cookie-cutter proposals. While a large number of applications may concentrate on one of the three CNCS Issue Areas: Youth Development, Economic Opportunity, and Healthy Futures, you may also notice that there is diversity in program models and designs, location, size, scope, organization type, and target populations. Understanding and expecting these differences will help you evaluate an applicant's proposed project in a fair and objective manner.

Page limits for application narratives

Applications are limited to 55 double-spaced pages in the Narratives, including the Executive Summary and Cover Page, as the pages print out from eGrants. Reviewers will not consider material submitted over the page limit. This limit does not include the Budget Narrative and Performance Measures. Note that the Performance Measures are printed at the *end* of the application narrative—if your panel has an application that exceeds the 55 page limit, the Panel Coordinator should contact your GARP Liaison for a final determination and guidance. Review Participants must follow CNCS guidance as this is a matter of equity to all applicants.

3.3.1 Conflict of interest

CNCS implements several procedures throughout the review process to ensure fair and equitable reviews. One such procedure is requiring all Reviewers to report any actual or potential conflicts of interest concerning the competition and applications assigned to them. A *conflict of interest is a situation in which conflict exists between one's private interest and official responsibilities*. Such competing interests can make it difficult for a Reviewer to fulfill his/her duties impartially. A conflict of interest exists even if no unethical or improper act results from it.

NOTE: Complete and submit your COI Statement by **April 13, 2012**.

Be sure to follow the directions on the COI Statement for submission.

Each Review Participant must complete a Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Statement (COI Form) for the applications they are assigned to review. This is found on the Reviewer Resource webpage. (<http://www.nationalservice.gov/egrants/sifpeerreview/instructions.asp>). Because of the unique nature of the review process and the sensitivity of the information through the review, **CNCS determines the potential for both Direct (actual) and Indirect (perceived) conflicts of interest as defined below.**

- ◆ A direct conflict of interest – often through personal involvement, connection to, or benefit from an application submitted to CNCS
- ◆ An indirect conflict of interest – through various forms of affiliation, personally or professionally with an applicant institution

NOTE: Be sure to examine your applications and alert CNCS of any potential conflict of interest.

Prior to reviewing any grant applications, you must inform CNCS of any potential conflicts of interest or appearances thereof. If you become aware of any potential conflict of interest as you review an application, you must immediately notify a CNCS representative (your Panel Coordinator or GARP Liaison). This notification should happen directly via phone or email. CNCS will determine how to handle any appearances of perceived or actual conflicts of interest and will inform you regarding what further steps, if any, to take. It is possible that you will not be able to serve as a Reviewer or Panel Coordinator for this grant competition if you have a conflict of interest or even if it would *appear* to others that you have a conflict of interest.

When examining conflicts of interest, you should also treat the following people's interests as if they were yours: any affiliation or relationship of your spouse, your minor child, a relative living in your immediate household, or anyone who is legally your partner with any of the relationships above. Examples of potentially biasing affiliations or relationships are listed below (see the COI Statement for more information).

- ◆ **Your personal submission of an application to CNCS**
- ◆ **Affiliation with an applicant institution. A conflict may be present if you have/hold (a):**
 - Current employment, are being considered for employment, or are consulting, advising, or other similar affiliation at the institution
 - Any formal or informal employment arrangement with the institution
 - Current membership on a visiting committee, board or similar body at the institution
 - Current enrollment as a student
 - Received and retained an honorarium or award from the institution within the last 12 months
 - Personal financial interest that would be affected by the outcome of this grant competition
 - Organization that is a potential sub-recipient, named in an intermediary application (as a pre-selected subgrantee), or is an actual applicant in the pre-award competition conducted by an intermediary organization applying for this competition
- ◆ **Relationship with someone who has personal interest in the proposal or other application, such as:**
 - Related by marriage or through family membership
 - Past or present business, professional, academic, volunteer or personal relationship
 - Employment at the institution within the last 12 months
 - Collaboration on a project or on a book, article, report or paper within the last 48 months

3.3.2 Bias

Bias, or a loss of impartiality, is one of those weaknesses that we all have the potential for, some of us exercise it, but none of us want to acknowledge that we have it. Bias is a preference or inclination that may inhibit impartial judgment or objectivity. One's bias is not limited to a negative judgment, or dislike of an application, and is more often found in favor, or an unfounded positive preference of an applicant or an aspect of an application.

Often, we are unaware of a bias that we have, and this flagged by another Review Participant, based on a comment that we make, or a consistent inflation or deflation in our assessment. Our biases are often rooted in our opinions and past experiences—which you are asked to bring in a structured format to this review. Utilizing your opinion in some ways, but not in others can be difficult to separate—especially as it is likely that a positive inclination or preference may be founded in your passion and excitement about a program. It is important that you are open to reconsideration should the issue of potential bias come to light. The Panel Coordinator also remains objective throughout the Review, and they may likely address a concern of bias with panel members during the review.

To avoid the insertion of bias, all Reviewers are asked to base their assessments solely on the facts and assertions contained in the application, return to re-evaluate an application, if needed; eliminate consideration of outside sources or information, and exercise consideration and respect throughout the review.

3.3.3 Confidentiality

Your designation as a Review Participant gives you access to information not generally available to the public and accords you with special professional and ethical responsibilities. Panelists are given access to information about applicants for use only during the evaluation process and for discussion only with fellow panel members and CNCS personnel. Therefore, you must not use that information for your

personal benefit or make it available for the benefit of any other individual or organization. You may, however, share any general information about CNCS that you learn.

After you complete your work as a Review Participant, you may maintain archival copies of review-related information. If you choose to keep archival copies, you must maintain them in a manner consistent with your confidentiality obligations. If you choose not to maintain archival copies, you must dispose of the information in a manner consistent with confidentiality obligations.

CNCS is committed to Open Government policy, and may make the names of all Review Participants available to the public after awards are made. However, your confidentiality with regard to the specific applications you reviewed will be maintained: Review Participant's names for the application reviews will be protected to the extent provided by law.

Details regarding confidentiality obligations are provided and discussed in the *Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest Statement for Review Participants in Appendix B*.

4.0 REVIEWING THE 2012 SOCIAL INNOVATION FUND APPLICATIONS

The 2012 Social Innovation Fund Grant Application Review Process (GARP) is based on a non-consensus model – meaning you do not need to reach consensus regarding the assessment of an application. Different perspectives and opinions are acceptable and welcomed.

Two types of expert review will take place simultaneously: a Program Review and an Evaluation Review. Reviewers have been assigned to one type or another based on their expertise. If you are unsure which review you are participating in, please contact your Panel Coordinator or GARP Liaison. Below you will find the description of the Program and Evaluation Reviews. Please only focus on the one for which you are participating in.

Each Program Reviewer is assigned to a panel consisting of up to five Reviewers and a Panel Coordinator. Each Evaluation Reviewer is assigned to a panel consisting of two Reviewers and a Panel Coordinator. Both types of review panels will be assigned between four and six applications, which are reviewed individually by each Reviewer and then discussed collectively by the entire panel. Generally, the applications are reviewed and discussed in two sets.

PROGRAM REVIEW

Reviewers will read each application, focusing on the quality of the applicant's response in most of the Program Design and Organizational Capability sections and all of the Cost Effectiveness/Budget Adequacy section.

EVALUATION REVIEW

Reviewers will read each application, focusing on the quality of the applicant's response in the Proposal for Evaluation in the Program Design category and Evaluation Experience in the Organizational Capacity category. Make note that you will need to read the whole application, since applicants may have addressed the Selection Criteria in another section of the application as well.

4.1 THE 2012 SOCIAL INNOVATION FUND SELECTION CRITERIA

PROGRAM REVIEW

You will be evaluating each application based on the elements for each category and subcategory of Selection Criteria (see Appendix C, Program Review *Individual Reviewer Worksheet*):

Required Online Training:

✓ "Applying the 2012 Social Innovation Fund Selection Criteria"

Goals and Objectives

To what extent did the applicant:

- ◆ Clearly identify the target community or geographies that they will serve and the target issue(s) their programming will focus on?
- ◆ Make a persuasive case using statistical information for the need related to the issue area(s) identified in the target geographical area(s) listed?
- ◆ Clearly identify specific measurable outcomes that will be achieved through their proposed program?
- ◆ Make a compelling case for their ability to successfully support the focus, goals, and approach they propose?

- ◆ Provide a clear, logical theory of change that outlines their investment approach and proposed outcomes?
- ◆ Identify the value-added activities, including technical assistance or other services, that will be offered to subgrantees to support their success in achieving these outcomes?

Description of Activities: Subgrantee Selection

To what extent did the applicant:

- ◆ Provide a clear profile of the type of subgrantee organization they hope to fund?
- ◆ Provide a clear and comprehensive plan for carrying out a competitive subgrantee selection process?
- ◆ Present a selection process that has a high likelihood of successfully identifying subgrantees that meet the Social Innovation Fund's requirements of having at least preliminary evidence of effectiveness, and are positioned to conduct evaluations that would achieve moderate or strong levels of evidence over a three to five year period?
- ◆ Provide a clear articulation of how they will assess applicants for readiness and capacity to implement program growth as a part of their participation in the Social Innovation Fund?
- ◆ Adequately propose a means of allocating grant awards so that larger sums are given to those subgrantees with higher levels of evidence of effectiveness to support the growth of their program impact?

Description of Activities: Proposal for Growing Subgrantee Impact

To what extent did the applicant:

- ◆ Articulate their theory or approach to growing effective subgrantee program models in alignment with their overall theory of change?
- ◆ Provide an appropriate list of characteristics the applicant will use to assess subgrantee capacity for growth?
- ◆ Include a description of how evidence of effectiveness will be used to determine when or how a program is well-situated for growth?
- ◆ Describe their means of supporting subgrantee growth through technical assistance or other resources?

Organizational Capacity: History of Competitive Subgranting

To what extent does the applicant:

- ◆ Have demonstrated experience selecting and awarding competitive grants to nonprofits?
- ◆ Demonstrate capacity to undertake the subgrant selection process outlined in their application?

Experience Growing Program Impact

To what extent does the applicant:

- ◆ Describe adequate examples of past efforts supporting grantee program growth through replication or expansion?
- ◆ Describe adequate resources to support successful subgrantee growth as proposed?
- ◆ Propose how best practices will be captured and shared, preferably based on successful past efforts?

Organizational Capacity: Ability to Provide Program Support and Oversight

To what extent does the applicant:

- ◆ Describe compelling examples of setting and implementing goals with grantees?
- ◆ Present a qualified roster of staff members that have the experience and capacity to effectively implement the proposed program? This includes the involvement of management, board members, etc.

- ◆ Present a compelling plan to provide assistance or support to build subgrantee capacity as needed?
- ◆ Describe experience operating and overseeing programs comparable to the ones proposed in the identified priority issue area(s) of activity, including specific examples of prior accomplishments and outcomes in these area(s)?
- ◆ Describe a plan for developing subgrantee performance measurement systems and using these to improve subgrantee performance?
- ◆ Describe experience monitoring subgrantees for compliance against programmatic requirements?
- ◆ Describe a sufficient plan for subgrantee monitoring?
- ◆ Propose an approach to hold both subgrantees and themselves accountable for meeting program goals?

Ability to Provide Financial Support and Oversight

To what extent does the applicant:

- ◆ Provide a compelling case that they have the experience and staff capacity to successfully manage the proposed Social Innovation Fund grant program at both the intermediary and subgrantee level from a fiscal perspective?
- ◆ Describe a staffing plan that engages staff members with sufficient capacity and experience to be effective and compliant?
- ◆ Describe sufficient plans for ensuring compliance with federal guidelines at the intermediary and subgrantee level?
- ◆ If the applicant is new to federal funding, do they provide adequate evidence that they have the means and plan to acquire necessary capacity to ensure compliance?

Strategy for Sustainability

To what extent does the applicant:

- ◆ Provide a compelling statement of commitment to continue the Social Innovation Fund's investment priorities beyond the life of the grant?
- ◆ Describe a successful strategy for ensuring subgrantees are positioned to continue evaluation and sustain program growth beyond the grant lifecycle?

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy:

Budget Justification

To what extent does the applicant:

- ◆ Propose a reasonable and justifiable budget that will support the capacity necessary to achieve desired outputs and outcomes?
- ◆ Present a budget adequate to successfully support program activities, especially in regard to evaluation, supporting subgrantee program growth, and running a successful subgrantee selection process?
- ◆ If applicable, provide a compelling case for proposing higher program costs due to an intention to make subgrants in areas that are significantly philanthropically underserved?

Description of Match Sources and Capacity

To what extent does the applicant:

- ◆ Present a compelling plan for securing the total match commitment for their Social Innovation Fund program?
- ◆ Describe adequate plans or efforts to assist subgrantees to secure their required match?

EVALUATION REVIEW

You will be evaluating each application based on the elements for the Use of Evidence category and Selection Criteria (see Appendix E, Evaluation Review *Individual Reviewer Worksheet*):

Description of Activities: Proposal for Evaluation

To what extent did the applicant:

- ◆ Describe anticipated program models that will be evaluated? Do these models have the potential to achieve at least moderate levels of evidence of effectiveness during their Social Innovation Fund grant period of three to five years?
- ◆ Explain how they will assess needs for and provide technical assistance to subgrantees as they design, implement, and monitor evaluations of their program models?
- ◆ If addressed, describe how they will work with an evaluation partner and what activities this partner will do to support the Social Innovation Fund portfolio?
- ◆ Describe an appropriate and detailed budget to support the cost of reasonable evaluation activities that will meet Social Innovation Fund evaluation requirements?

Organizational Capacity: Evaluation Experience

To what extent does the applicant:

- ◆ Demonstrate experience in managing and supporting evaluations of program models they have funded in the past?
- ◆ Demonstrate the capacity to apply evidence/evaluation results to decision-making and investment strategies?
- ◆ Have experience influencing and supporting its grantees to use evidence to improve program performance?
- ◆ Demonstrate their staff's capacity (or contracted capacity) to ensure successful evaluation of their subgrantees' program models?

4.1.1 Consideration of the Performance Measures during Expert Review

Each applicant's Performance Measures are included at the end of their 424 Narrative. The content from the Performance Measures can and should be considered in making assessments of the application.

Reviewers should **not** consider, assess, or comment on the structure of the Performance Measures, or the quality of the measures themselves. You can only use relevant content from the Measures along with application narrative to make assessments about the outcomes of the application.

4.2 CONDUCTING THE INDIVIDUAL REVIEW

Reviewers will read each application, focusing on the quality of the applicant's response in the Selection Criteria.

Reviewers will then assess the application, highlighting the application's significant strengths and weaknesses relative to the Selection Criteria for each section, and assign a rating to each section.

Required Online Training:



"Reviewing the 2012 Social Innovation Fund Applications"

Significant Strengths	Significant Weaknesses
Shows that the applicant has clearly demonstrated both an understanding of, and the ability to address, a key issue in program implementation or management	Criteria is either unaddressed or addressed so poorly that it causes concern about the applicant's ability to successfully implement the proposed project

4.2.1 Reading the Applications

The applications that you will be evaluating are generally reviewed in two groups and it is important to read the applications in the order that your panel will discuss them. Your goal is to focus on assessing how well the application has addressed the established Selection Criteria described in the *Notice*. Your assigned applications will be made available in eGrants for Program Reviewers and sent to the Evaluation Reviewers on the first day of the Review Period: April 12, 2012.

Do not feel as if you have to produce one or more “highly-rated” applications. Although applicants are competing against each other, **Reviewers should consider the applications significant strengths and weaknesses when measured against the Selection Criteria, NOT measured against other applications.** The goal for Reviewers when reading an application is to seek out information in the application that enables you to answer the following questions:

- ◆ Does the application address the Selection Criteria?
 - If yes, to what degree and what is the quality/feasibility of what is proposed?
 - If not, what is lacking or unclear?

4.2.2 Completing the Individual Reviewer Worksheet (IRW)

All Reviewers must complete an IRW for each application assigned to their panel. There are four components to the IRW:

1. **Rating** the application based on each specific element,
2. Providing **comments** on strengths and weaknesses for each element
3. Adding the **Total Score**
4. (at the conclusion) Selecting comments to be included in the **Applicant Feedback Summary**.

How to complete the Individual Review Worksheet:

1. Complete draft IRW
2. Submit to Panel Coordinator for review
3. Receive feedback from Panel Coordinator and address/incorporate prior to Panel Discussion
4. Revise the IRW based on any clarifications or changes from the Panel Discussion
5. Submit the IRW to the Program Officer Liaison (POL)
6. Receive feedback from the POL through your Panel Coordinator and address/incorporate prior to posting into eGrants or sending to your PC.

In the IRW, you will evaluate the extent to which the application meets each of the elements specified in the *Notice*. Each element will be rated as *Excellent*, *Good*, *Acceptable* or *Not Acceptable*. Specific definitions for each rating are provided in the Review Rubric (see Appendix G, *Review Rubric*). Your assessment is based on your evaluation of the quality of the applicant’s response to the Selection Criteria when reading the application.

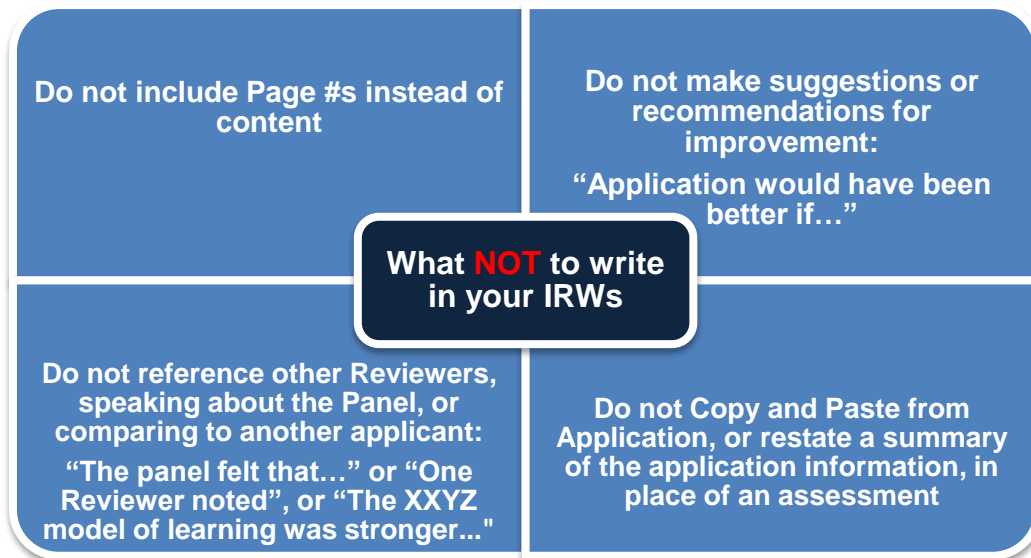
For each application you review, your Applicant Feedback Summary comments will:

- ◆ Capture your summary assessment of the application’s significant strengths and weaknesses (not every noted strength and weakness should be included in the Applicant Feedback Summary section)
- ◆ Provide a basis for the Ratings that you assign to the application’s elements
- ◆ Be provided to CNCS Staff and the applicant with useful feedback

See *Example IRW*, Appendix F.

Although you may identify many strengths and weaknesses as you review each application, you are not expected to list each one – only the **significant** ones (see Appendix H, *Writing Meaningful Comments: Guidance and Examples*).

It is important to keep in mind when reviewing the applications, what types of information you should NOT assess or comment on (see also Appendices F & L: *IRW Guidance Document*, and *Reviewer Tips* for more information):



In completing your IRWs, if you are concerned that you did not understand something in the application, do not presume to know what the applicant meant to say or tried to say. Instead, assess the application based on what you did understand; anything that is unclear can be addressed during the panel discussion (or *noted as unclear* in the IRW comments). Similarly, you should exercise caution about how you reference information that was in other parts of the application. Because applicants might often include information in another narrative section that speaks directly to the Selection Criteria you are focusing on, you **should** note the information that was addressed in another section and it should be considered. You **should not**, however, comment on the structure of the Performance Measures if it does not relate to the relevant Selection Criteria.

4.3 PARTICIPATING IN PANEL DISCUSSIONS

After the individual reviews for each group of applications have been completed, the panels will convene by conference call to discuss each application within that group. The purpose of the panel discussion is to share thoughts and discuss each Reviewer's assessment of the application based on the Selection Criteria. While consensus is not a requirement of the panel discussion, Reviewers are asked to engage in discussion about the Criteria and consider the assessments and findings of fellow panel members. The discussion should cover each of the relevant elements of the application, and explore the points of agreement and disagreement among Reviewer IRWs.

Note: You do not need to achieve consensus among Reviewers. It is, however, understood that Reviewers will consider each other's opinions and perspectives, and determine what refinements or amendments can be made to their IRW comments rating to reflect their final assessment.

After a panel discussion has been completed for all assigned applications, each Reviewer revises and finalizes his/her IRWs to reflect any changes to the original assessment. The Panel Coordinator will complete a Panel Discussion Report for each application and share the draft with the panel's Program Officer Liaison for review and comment.

4.3.1 Tips for Productive Panel Discussions

During the panel discussion, all Reviewers and the Panel Coordinator will participate on the conference call. The average time for discussion is expected to be no more than 30 minutes per application. Panels will engage in discussion focused on the comments, assessments and ratings resulting from the individual reviews. The panel discussion should be well rounded and focused on a discussion of the quality of the application based on the Selection Criteria—the **discussion should not revolve solely around the areas where panel members provided differing ratings** for a section.

Reviewers may agree, disagree, clarify individual assessments and misunderstandings, and ask questions while collectively discussing an application. Based on these discussions, you may come to view aspects of the application differently than you did during the individual review. Preparedness, tact, patience and conscious participation are just some of the ways you can assist in the process of assessing applications, and in making your panel discussions meaningful.

Helpful Tips on How to be an Effective Panel Member

- #1: Review and be familiar with the *Notice*, the Selection Criteria, the Reviewer Rubric and other relevant documents.
- #2: Allow your Panel Coordinator to lead. Panel Coordinators have different styles and will assert themselves in different ways and at different times. Recognize the importance of the PC role and respect it.
- #3: Have both the application and your completed IRW in front of you for each discussion.
- #4: Ask others to explain or clarify their positions and be an active listener. Do not be afraid to ask questions.
- #5: Focus on the content of what is being said and not the person.
- #6: Participate actively in the discussion, using supporting evidence from the application for your points.
- #7: Be receptive to opposing viewpoints and put your emotions aside.
- #8: Answer other panel members' questions and challenges cordially and diplomatically.
- #9: Expect to return to your IRF and make revisions on several occasions before finalizing the review product.

4.4 SUBMITTING FINAL IRWs

After the panel discussions are completed, revisit your IRWs and make any appropriate amendments to your comments or ratings to reflect your conclusive assessment. Then complete the Applicant Feedback Summary portion of the IRW. Send it to your Panel Coordinator to get feedback from your Program Officer Liaison. Once your Program Officer Liaison has provided feedback, your Panel Coordinator will give the Program Reviewers clearance to paste your IRWs into eGrants. When you are pasting your IRWs into eGrants, you will see two sections of criteria for the application. Program Reviewers will enter their IRWs into section A, and Evaluation Reviewers will enter their IRWs into section B. The review forms will mirror the Word version of the IRW that you have completed. (See Appendix K: *eGrants Instructions*).

Evaluation Reviewers will email a clean final copy of the IRW to the Panel Coordinator.

The overall score from each Reviewer's IRW for an application will be averaged by CNCS to represent the overall panel score for that application.

4.5 COMPLETING THE CLOSE OUT PROCESS

After all review materials are final, all Reviewers and Panel Coordinators will complete their individual close outs. Your close out is completed when you have:

- ◆ Ensured that all IRWs are complete by:
 - Reviewing IRWs for improper language
 - Completing Applicant Feedback Summary
 - Ensuring Ratings are correctly added for a proper Overall Score
 - Entering final version in eGrants for Program Reviewers, sending a final clean copy of the IRW to the PC for Evaluation Reviewers
 - Completed and submitted your 2012 Social Innovation Fund Expert Review Process Evaluation. You will receive the URL for the evaluation form after the review has ended.

CNCS will confirm that each Review Participant has satisfied the requirements of the review, as described in the Participation Agreement. Honoraria checks will be paid to each Review Participant electronically via direct deposit within 30 days after you receive confirmation from CNCS that you have satisfactorily completed all requirements stated in the Participation Agreement. **Please consult the Participation Agreement and the information covered in the Orientation Sessions for conditions that may prevent you from receiving part or all of your honorarium payment.**

Thank you for being a Review Participant in the 2012 Social Innovation Fund Review!



5.0 SUPPLEMENT FOR PANEL COORDINATORS

All Panel Coordinators are responsible for reading the 2012 Social Innovation Fund Expert Review Handbook and completing the required orientation sessions. It is also important to carefully read the Selection Criteria as laid out in the 2012 Social Innovation Fund (SIF) Notice of Federal Funding Availability (see Appendix A, *Notice of Federal Funding Availability*). Understanding these criteria is critical to being able to provide guidance to your panel members and to ensure that the Selection Criteria are adequately considered and discussed in the expert review. To be an effective Panel Coordinator, you must be knowledgeable not only about the SIF review process, but also about the Review Participants' role and activities.

5.1 OVERVIEW OF THE PANEL COORDINATOR ROLE

The Panel Coordinator plays a key role in the successful implementation of the external review, particularly with ensuring the timely delivery of quality review products to CNCS. Key aspects of the Panel Coordinator's role in the external review process include:

- ◆ Managing the panel's activities in order to meet the review schedule
- ◆ Serving as the primary link between panel members and CNCS Staff
- ◆ Facilitating panel discussions and fostering a climate of respect within the panel
- ◆ Providing your panel with constructive and effective guidance in both the expert review process and the technical aspects of the review
- ◆ Ensuring Reviewers address the Selection Criteria in their IRWs and panel discussions adequately
- ◆ Providing timely and consistent feedback to Reviewers on the quality of their review forms
- ◆ Ensuring Reviewers receive and incorporate feedback from the POL on their review forms
- ◆ Compiling the review results (comments, ratings) at varying times during the review to inform the panel and CNCS Staff of the review panel's progress
- ◆ Completing the Panel Discussion Reports
- ◆ Reviewing the Applicant Feedback Summaries from each Reviewer

Carefully read the Panel Coordinator Participation Agreement specifying the expectations of the Panel Coordinator role. If you have any questions, please email PeerReviewers@cns.gov. Emails to this address are received by GARP support staff and every effort is made to respond within one business day.

5.2 PREPARING FOR THE 2012 SOCIAL INNOVATION FUND GRANT APPLICATION REVIEW

5.2.1 Panel Coordinator Timeline and Milestones

The expert review process (excluding orientation sessions and other preliminary steps) spans 19 days. Table 3 specifies the timeline and key milestones for Panel Coordinators. A Reviewer schedule is provided in *Section 3.1 – Reviewer Timeline and Milestones*.

Table 3: Social Innovation Fund 2012 Timeline and Milestones for Panel Coordinators

Date	Tasks	Milestones
Thursday 4/12/2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive panel assignments • Download applications from eGrants for Program Review Panels • Receive applications sent to you for Evaluation Review Panels 	

Date	Tasks	Milestones
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review all applications for Conflicts of Interest (COI) Download COI Statement and Panel Coordinator Participant Agreement from webpage 	
Friday 4/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit COI Statement and Panel Coordinator Participant Agreement Read first group of applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit COI Statement and Participant Agreement
Saturday-Sunday 4/14-4/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive draft IRWs for first group of applications from all Reviewers 	
Monday 4/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Panel Coordinator Check-in (I) Fri, Feb 3, 1PM EST 	
Tuesday 4/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide feedback on draft IRWs to all Reviewers Provide panel discussion agenda to all panel members Prepare for panel discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide IRW feedback
Wednesday 4/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate panel discussion of first group of applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Panel discussion of first group
Thursday 4/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write PDRs for first group of applications and send to Program Office Liaison (POL) Send IRWs for first group of applications to POL Panel Coordinator Check-in (II) Wed, April 18, 1PM EST 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit PDRs for first group Submit IRWs for first group
Friday-Monday 4/20-4/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive feedback from POL and finalize PDRs and submit in eGrants for Program Review panels and email to PeerReviewers@cns.gov for Evaluation Review panels Receive feedback from POL on reviewer's IRWs, pass that along to reviewers Read second group of applications Receive draft IRWs for second group of applications from all Reviewers 	
Tuesday 4/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide feedback on draft IRWs to all Reviewers Provide panel discussion agenda to all panel members Prepare for panel discussion on second group of applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide IRW feedback
Wednesday 4/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate panel discussion of second group of applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Panel discussion of second group
Thursday 4/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Panel Coordinator Check-in (III) Thursday, April 26, 1PM EST Write draft PDRs for second group of applications and send to POL Send IRWs for second group of applications to POL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit PDRs for second group Submit IRWs for second group
Friday-Sunday 4/27-4/29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perform Quality Control on all work products (review and monitor Word and eGrants submissions) 'Finalize all PDRs and submit to GARP Liaison Receive feedback from POL on Reviewer's IRWs, pass that along to Reviewers 	
Monday 4/30/2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete check-out process 	

5.2.2 Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality

Even though you will not be evaluating the Social Innovation Fund applications, as Panel Coordinator you are still subject to the confidentiality and conflict of interest considerations outlined in *Section 3.3 – Conflict of Interest*, *Section 3.4 – Confidentiality*, and the *Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest Statement for Review Participants* (COI Statement).

As soon as the applications assigned to your panel are available in eGrants, access and examine each of your assigned applications for potential conflicts. If you suspect a conflict or have a question, contact CNCS immediately and let the staff determine whether a conflict does indeed exist. If CNCS determines that there is a conflict, CNCS Staff will provide you with appropriate guidance. Complete and submit the COI Statement in advance of the start of the review.

Note that this form should be completed whether you have or have not identified potential conflicts—as it represents your understanding of your responsibility regarding COIs, and Confidentiality, and your agreement to adhere to the guidelines in the instance that a COI circumstance arises.

5.2.3 Panel Introduction Call

The Panel Coordinator's role in the Panel Introduction Call is to organize and begin leading the panel to prepare for the review. **This call should take place within 24 hours of receiving your panel assignments!** It is important to contact your assigned Reviewers and create the review schedule as early as you can. You will be assigned a panel of up to five Reviewers with varying fields and levels of expertise. Once you have the contact information for the Reviewers on your panel, you should reach out to introduce yourself and initiate the planning process for the Panel Introduction Call and subsequent panel discussions. Suggested agenda topics for the Panel Introduction Call:

Note: See the "Panel Intro Call Agenda" document for a detailed reference of what to cover on this important call.

- ◆ Allow each Reviewer to give his/her background and level of experience with the review process
- ◆ Establish optimal means of communication for each Reviewer (e.g., preferred email address, phone number)
- ◆ Review the expectations and schedule, and work together to set the dates and times of the panel discussions
 - Encourage flexibility and a commitment to the review schedule and needs
 - Discuss and consider time zones for each person, and general "ideal times" for availability and responsiveness
- ◆ Ensure that everyone is reading the applications in the same order (any order is fine: alphabetically, as they appear in your panel assignment email, etc.)

5.3 SETTING UP YOUR PANEL FOR SUCCESS

Ensuring that Reviewers complete work on time

Setting up for success:

- ◆ Create group agreements that include completing the work on time.
 - Be sure all Reviewers voice their perspective in creating shared group agreements, expectations and schedule. If there are differing expectations, this is the best time to address the standard and expectations of CNCS, and you as a Panel coordinator.
- ◆ Monitor and check in with panel members via email.
 - Send out updates of information and reminders of milestones that the group agreed to. ("Remember, by the end of today, everyone should have read their first three applications and written at least one Individual Reviewer Worksheet!")
- ◆ As a group, create a realistic schedule for completion that attempts to consider everyone's needs.

- Remind the Reviewers to keep their Timetable handy, refer to it frequently.
- ◆ Remind Reviewers of time commitment and encourage them to set aside or otherwise minimize major distractions (e.g., postpone activities that can be done another time).
- ◆ Check in periodically to see if the agreed schedule is still realistic and achievable (and modify if needed).

Interventions:

- ◆ Remind group of agreed-upon schedule, emphasizing that the reasoning behind pacing themselves is to prevent them from becoming overwhelmed and ensuring that each application has received the fairest quality review from the panel.
- ◆ *Next step:* speak with each Reviewer individually to see how you can help him/her get work done on time. Give heads up to your GARP Liaison.
- ◆ *Final action:* remind each Reviewer that you will need to notify your GARP Liaison if the work is not done satisfactorily and submitted by the deadline.

Ensuring that Individual Reviewer Forms are quality products

Setting up for success:

- ◆ Create group agreements that include preparing thoughtful and thorough IRWs (Refer to the *Example IRW*).
- ◆ Review the Selection Criteria by which each application should be evaluated.
- ◆ Acknowledge that “details” may be harder for some work styles than others but again, a certain level of detail is necessary for this review.

Interventions:

- ◆ *Next step:* speak with the Reviewers individually and go through specific areas for improvement for the IRW.
- ◆ *Request your GARP Liaison or Program Officer Liaison join a panel call to explain or clarify any misunderstandings.*

Ensuring Reviewer responsiveness to phone calls and/or emails

Setting up for success:

- ◆ Talk with panels to establish a response time norm. (Example: all emails will be responded to within eight hours, including weekends.)
- ◆ Set precedent of asking Reviewers to “reply to confirm” they have received an email.
- ◆ Confirm contact lists in the beginning with agreements that they must be available:
 - Iterate that most communication will be via email and requires response
 - Confirm location of listed phone number (work/home/cell)
 - General hours of group availability (day and evening hours)
 - Communicate single days, or hours that a Reviewer is not available
 - Discuss time zones, and general conflicting obligations (should not be numerous or extensive)
- ◆ Respond promptly when contacted by Reviewers.
- ◆ Interventions:

- ◆ If Reviewer is non-responsive to one means of contact, try an alternative format (e.g., if first contact was through email, try the phone).
- ◆ Contact GARP Liaison to give a heads up if a Reviewer has been non-responsive to attempts. (Don't wait for several days if a Reviewer is nonresponsive, let your GARP Liaison know right away.)

Ensuring that Reviewers have read the *Notice* and key documents

Setting up for success:

- ◆ Emphasize the need for familiarity with the *Notice* and related documents to effectively review the proposals.
- ◆ Revisit the roles and responsibilities and Selection Criteria by which each application should be evaluated.

Interventions:

- ◆ Speak with Reviewer of concern individually to see if he/she understands the *Notice*, potentially highlighting a comment that was made in contradiction with a *Notice* Requirement.
- ◆ If you sense difficulties that might benefit from this assistance, offer to review them together, etc.
- ◆ Final step: Contact GARP Liaison to notify them of the issue.

Creating equal “air” time for all Reviewers in the panel discussion

Setting up for success:

- ◆ Begin with discussion on the general aspects of the application, moving toward the specific aspects to encourage a structured objective discussion of the facts.
- ◆ Take note of how each Reviewer reacts to conflict or disagreements.
- ◆ Work to include the entire panel in the discussion for 100% participation.
- ◆ At the outset of each discussion remind the panel of the group agreements.
- ◆ Set the tone during the first discussion, communicating your facilitation style and the expectation for participation—calling on each Reviewer to state his/her opinions to set the precedent.
- ◆ Acknowledge and state that different work styles may participate differently but that all must have an equal opportunity and equal contribution to the discussion.

Interventions:

- ◆ Step in when group members are not able to keep each other engaged. Structure and lead discussion so that each Reviewer takes turn to state his/her comments on the application.
- ◆ Actively draw in any Reviewer who seems withdrawn and find out what they would like to contribute.
- ◆ Step in when group is not able to maintain balanced participation.
- ◆ Facilitate the conversation flow as needed (e.g., gently deflect a dominating person's input by allowing others to speak).

Preventing difficult interactions among panel member(s) due to personality conflict

Setting up for success:

- ◆ Address the application's strengths or weaknesses more than the Reviewer's opinions.

- ◆ Ask Reviewers to provide specific reference from application, to encourage objectivity.
- ◆ Keep the discussions moving. If a point of strong disagreement occurs, encourage productive discussion about the Selection Criteria. Then move to another point once the various assessments have been stated.

Interventions:

- ◆ Acknowledge the issue and provide guidance; remind panel to focus on what is in the proposal and the relevant points.
- ◆ Use humor, if appropriate, to break tension .Encourage humor from others.
- ◆ Talk with Reviewer privately and ask if something is bothering them – let him/her express it. Ask what the panel member would like to do about it.
- ◆ Remind the panel to do what is best for the sake of the applicant.

Note: Your responsibility is to the panel as a whole. If one panel member's needs are taking away from the panel as a whole, you need to seek help from CNCS Staff.

Preventing Review bias

Setting up for success:

- ◆ Reiterate Reviewer roles and responsibilities, and remind each panel member about his/her responsibility to give each application a fair and objective review.

Interventions:

- ◆ Remind the group as a whole that there is that fine line between contributing their expertise and crossing into bias, so step back and ask them to see if the point they are making may be coming from a bias. Still value their perspective but let them decide.
- ◆ Ask Reviewers to provide evidence or elaboration to substantiate his/her point.
- ◆ Refer to the Rubric details, and the Selection Criteria when asking Review to reconsider the point.
- ◆ Use humor, when appropriate, to bring about awareness of bias.

Assisting Reviewers who appear to struggle with the technical or other requirements of the review

Setting up for success:

- ◆ Check in regularly with your panel members both as a group and individually.
- ◆ Monitor their progress in writing their IRWs.
- ◆ Ask: “How can I assist you?”

Interventions:

- ◆ Set up a time to work individually with that panel member to get his/her reviews posted in eGrants or sent to you.
- ◆ Contact your GARP Liaison.
- ◆ Remember that your responsibility is to the panel as a whole. If one panel member's needs are taking away from the panel as a whole, you need to seek help from CNCS Staff. Do not hesitate to ask CNCS Staff for individualized support for the panel member.

5.4 COORDINATING YOUR PANEL

As the Panel Coordinator, you will monitor and guide the Reviewers to ensure engaging discussions and produce a summary document (the Panel Discussion Report) that reflects the panel's assessment

of each assigned application. Both points of agreement and disagreement should be considered in the panel discussion.

Reaching consensus or agreement on comments and ratings in the application is not the purpose of the panel discussion. Reviewers should discuss their ratings and assessments in full consideration of other opinions and experience levels without the pressure of aligning their results. Based on the discussion, Reviewers will need to return to their IRWs to revise (if necessary) and finalize their assessments to reflect their final opinion.

The Panel Coordinator should take note of the discussion points and document the general considerations, including potential areas of concern, in the Panel Discussion Report for each application discussed.

The entire Expert Review will be conducted remotely using a Field Review model. Several aspects of the Field Review model can make the Panel Coordinator's role somewhat challenging:

- ◆ The overlap of review tasks in a condensed timeframe
- ◆ The absence of face-to-face interaction for communication and discussions
- ◆ The necessity to facilitate discussions among five people for a common goal
- ◆ Coordinating schedules of six people (including the Panel Coordinator) to performing review functions while also carrying on their lives (in different time zones)

5.4.1 Interacting with the Program Officer Liaison

The Program Officer Liaison is your resource for programmatic (SIF specific) inquiries. They will also review the Panel Discussion Reports and your Reviewer's IRWs that are completed after each Panel Discussion. You can also expect that Program Officer Liaisons will have a brief conversation or check in with your panel before you enter the Panel Discussions to answer any questions that panelists may have about how to apply the Selection Criteria or about a concern identified in an application. You are encouraged to initiate or request a meeting with your POL (with your panel, or with you on your panel's behalf) if you are receiving multiple questions from the panelists about particular criteria, or the same application.

You can also expect that a POL may proactively check in with you during the actual review.

Be sure that all of your correspondence with your POL takes place through the Innovations@cns.gov email address. You must include your Panel# in the Subject line, and CC: your GARP Liaison.

5.4.2 Facilitating the Panel Discussion

As the Panel Coordinator, the panel discussions should revolve around the Selection Criteria—utilize the IRW Guidance document and the Reviewer Rubric as needed to keep panel members focused on the appropriate elements and weights. It is important to constructively communicate your observations and expectations, while encouraging your panel members to do the same. The expectation is a smooth, timely and organized process that results in a fair, objective and quality assessment of applicant's proposal. Reviewers may agree, disagree, clarify individual assessments and misunderstandings, and ask questions while collectively discussing an application. Reviewers may have the same rating for applications, but different rationale for their ratings, and/or Reviewers may take note of the same issues but apply or weigh them differently. Therefore, it is important to encourage discussion among panel members to ensure application strengths and weaknesses are viewed considering the same criteria. The diverse level of panel members' expertise and backgrounds will lend itself to valuable panel discussions. However, it is important to keep in mind that the discussion should extend beyond *areas of disagreement or differing ratings*.

CNCS does not provide specific requirements for the panel discussions, and the following are offered only as suggestions (see Appendix M, *Panel Coordinator Tips* for additional information on questions and guiding discussions):

- ◆ Utilize online scheduling tools (such as Doodle, Schedule Once, etc. according to your panel's preference) to coordinate schedules for arranging the calls.
- ◆ Provide an agenda prior to the call and begin the call by reviewing the agenda to ensure everyone has the same expectations.
- ◆ Begin the discussion of the application by providing a summary of the proposed project.
- ◆ Identify a specific order for each Reviewer to summarize his/her individual evaluation.
- ◆ Specify set time limits for each Reviewer and/or each application.

Facilitating panel discussions from a distance, via telephone, has some unique challenges. Some of these challenges include: background noise (or conversely, muted phones, and sparse participation), competing distractions (driving, multi-tasking, or other persons nearby); not being able to observe body language, technology barriers, and possible confusion about scheduled times due to time zone differences. You will need to pay close attention to human dynamics and signals from your panel members to facilitate effectively, and be extra rigorous in ensuring that panel communications are clear and understood by all.

Table 4: Panel Coordinator Challenges and Possible Solutions

Challenge	Possible Solutions
Starting calls on time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send email reminders in advance of call. • Panelists should have a call-in number, application(s) being discussed, and relevant notes from the Panel Coordinator available before the call start time.
Panel members speaking over each other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach agreement on how panel members will be recognized to speak. • If a particular Reviewer is especially experiencing this problem, a private conversation may be in order.
Not having a visual that everyone can see (e.g., an evolving list of significant strengths and weaknesses for the application)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggest that everyone is at a computer or has printed documents on hand during discussion. • Repeat/restate a comment made to be sure everyone is discussing the same topic. • Make specific page/paragraph/topic references for each application ("for the Kansas app, at the bottom of page 5 ...").
One Reviewer is especially quiet during a call	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directly engage the Reviewer by asking what he/she thinks about the point being discussed.

5.4.3 Providing Feedback on Individual Reviewer Worksheet

Two primary aspects of the Panel Coordinator's role are to monitor Reviewers' progress and to guide Reviewers to produce high-quality IRWs by the established deadlines. The IRWs document a Reviewer's assessment of an application and serve as the foundation for the review results (provided to CNCS Staff and later to applicants as feedback). Often, there is a direct correlation between the quality of the IRWs and the roadblocks encountered in completing the remainder of the review process for the panel as a whole. As Reviewers begin completing their IRWs, you are asked to review and provide constructive feedback on their IRWs.

Your primary focus in reviewing and providing feedback on IRWs is to ensure that Reviewers:

- ◆ Include significant strengths and weaknesses that relate to the Selection Criteria.

- ◆ Select ratings that are supported by the significant strengths and weaknesses.
- ◆ Are consistent throughout the document.

You are not expected to edit the IRWs; however, you are expected to point out suggested edits to the Reviewers – (possibly using Track Changes). The most important task is to help Reviewers understand the IRW and what is expected in the level of quality. As a general rule, we expect that you will review each IRW only once. The Reviewer will apply your feedback to subsequent IRWs, and subsequent IRWs should require less-intensive feedback.

If a panel member is not completing his/her reviews as scheduled, you should contact that Reviewer to understand what the problems are, and to ensure that he/she can get back on schedule. If this issue recurs, the GARP Liaison should be made aware of the efforts and the possible lack of compliance from that Reviewer. This proactive guidance will prevent major challenges for everyone (especially the panel) as the review advances.

Reviewers will complete the draft IRWs outside of eGrants and email to Panel Coordinator. Read the draft IRW and provide your feedback to the Reviewer via email or phone. Second draft IRWs should be sent to the POL who will review them to ensure that the Selection Criteria is being applied correctly.

5.4.4 Completing the Panel Discussion Report

The PDR serves to document the substance of a panel's discussion for an application and your observations or concerns. The PDR should capture elements of the Selection Criteria that the panel members discussed, if there were major varying opinions, concerns that were noted outside of the Selection Criteria, or difficult areas of conversation on an aspect of the application. Because there will inevitably be varying opinions, ratings and assessments from the panel members, the PDR should offer an objective summary of the discussion. When presenting issues or hiccups that arose, be sure to provide information on how you or the panel responded/addressed the matter. Your personal perspectives or observations should be provided separately in the Observations from the Panel Coordinator section.

The PDR is available on the Reviewer Resource Webpage. Prepare a draft PDR for each application discussed and provide the draft to your POL (Innovations@cns.gov) for their review and feedback. ANY correspondence with the POL should occur through this email address, and you should include your Panel # in the Subject Line and CC: your respective GARP Liaison. Once a PDR is final, send it to your GARP Liaison at PeerReviewers@cns.gov.

Thank you for being a Panel Coordinator in the 2012 Social Innovation Fund Expert Review!



APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – NOTICE OF FEDERAL FUNDING AVAILABILITY

Also available at: http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/12_0210_sif_nofa.pdf

APPENDIX B – CONFIDENTIALITY AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST FORM AND REVIEW PARTICIPANT AGREEMENT

“Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest Form and Review Participant Agreement are both available for you to download from the CNCS Reviewer Resource Website:

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/egrants/sifpeerreview/instructions.asp>

APPENDIX C – INDIVIDUAL REVIEWER WORKSHEET

PROGRAM REVIEW

Individual Reviewer Worksheet 2012 Social Innovation Fund Grant Competition Program Review			
Legal Applicant: _____ Application ID: _____			
Reviewer Name: _____			
Assess the extent to which the applicant addresses each of the elements of the application. Select a Rating for each element; provide comments for each Rating. All comments should address the significant strengths and weaknesses identified in your assessment that justify your Rating.			
Goals and Objectives To what extent did the applicant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Clearly identify the target community or geographies that they will serve and the target issue(s) their programming will focus on? ◆ Make a persuasive case using statistical information for the need related to the issue area(s) identified in the target geographical area(s) listed? ◆ Clearly identify specific measurable outcomes that will be achieved through their proposed program? ◆ Make a compelling case for their ability to successfully support the focus, goals, and approach they propose? ◆ Provide a clear, logical theory of change that outlines their investment approach and proposed outcomes? ◆ Identify the value-added activities, including technical assistance or other services, that will be offered to subgrantees to support their success in achieving these outcomes? 			
Comments:			
_ Excellent ₍₁₀₎	_ Good ₍₈₎	_ Acceptable ₍₆₎	_ Not Acceptable ₍₄₎
Description of Activities: Subgrantee Selection To what extent did the applicant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provide a clear profile of the type of subgrantee organization they hope to fund? ◆ Provide a clear and comprehensive plan for carrying out a competitive subgrantee selection process? ◆ Present a selection process that has a high likelihood of successfully identifying subgrantees that meet the Social Innovation Fund's requirements of having at least preliminary evidence of effectiveness, and are positioned to conduct evaluations that would achieve moderate or strong levels of evidence over a three to five year period? ◆ Provide a clear articulation of how they will assess applicants for readiness and capacity to implement program growth as a part of their participation in the Social Innovation Fund? 			

- ◆ Adequately propose a means of allocating grant awards so that larger sums are given to those subgrantees with higher levels of evidence of effectiveness to support the growth of their program impact?

Individual Reviewer Worksheet
2012 Social Innovation Fund Grant Competition
Program Review

Comments:

_ Excellent ₍₁₀₎

_ Good ₍₈₎

_ Acceptable ₍₆₎

_ Not Acceptable₍₄₎

Description of Activities: Proposal for Growing Subgrantee Impact

To what extent did the applicant:

- ◆ Articulate their theory or approach to growing effective subgrantee program models in alignment with their overall theory of change?
- ◆ Provide an appropriate list of characteristics the applicant will use to assess subgrantee capacity for growth?
- ◆ Include a description of how evidence of effectiveness will be used to determine when or how a program is well-situated for growth?
- ◆ Describe their means of supporting subgrantee growth through technical assistance or other resources?

Comments:

_ Excellent ₍₁₀₎

_ Good ₍₈₎

_ Acceptable ₍₆₎

_ Not Acceptable₍₄₎

Organizational Capacity:

History of Competitive Subgranting

To what extent does the applicant:

- ◆ Have demonstrated experience selecting and awarding competitive grants to nonprofits?
- ◆ Demonstrate capacity to undertake the subgrant selection process outlined in their application?

Experience Growing Program Impact

To what extent does the applicant:

- ◆ Describe adequate examples of past efforts supporting grantee program growth through replication or expansion?
- ◆ Describe adequate resources to support successful subgrantee growth as proposed?
- ◆ Propose how best practices will be captured and shared, preferably based on successful past efforts?

Comments:_ Excellent ₍₁₀₎_ Good ₍₈₎_ Acceptable ₍₆₎_ Not Acceptable₍₄₎

Individual Reviewer Worksheet
2012 Social Innovation Fund Grant Competition
Program Review

Organizational Capacity:**Ability to Provide Program Support and Oversight**

To what extent does the applicant:

- ◆ Describe compelling examples of setting and implementing goals with grantees?
- ◆ Present a qualified roster of staff members that have the experience and capacity to effectively implement the proposed program? This includes the involvement of management, board members, etc.
- ◆ Present a compelling plan to provide assistance or support to build subgrantee capacity as needed?
- ◆ Describe experience operating and overseeing programs comparable to the ones proposed in the identified priority issue area(s) of activity, including specific examples of prior accomplishments and outcomes in these area(s)?
- ◆ Describe a plan for developing subgrantee performance measurement systems and using these to improve subgrantee performance?
- ◆ Describe experience monitoring subgrantees for compliance against programmatic requirements?
- ◆ Describe a sufficient plan for subgrantee monitoring?
- ◆ Propose an approach to hold both subgrantees and themselves accountable for meeting program goals?

Ability to Provide Financial Support and Oversight

To what extent does the applicant:

- ◆ Provide a compelling case that they have the experience and staff capacity to successfully manage the proposed Social Innovation Fund grant program at both the intermediary and subgrantee level from a fiscal perspective?
- ◆ Describe a staffing plan that engages staff members with sufficient capacity and experience to be effective and compliant?
- ◆ Describe sufficient plans for ensuring compliance with federal guidelines at the intermediary and subgrantee level?
- ◆ If the applicant is new to federal funding, do they provide adequate evidence that they have the means and plan to acquire necessary capacity to ensure compliance?

Strategy for Sustainability

To what extent does the applicant:

- ◆ Provide a compelling statement of commitment to continue the Social Innovation Fund's investment priorities beyond the life of the grant?
- ◆ Describe a successful strategy for ensuring subgrantees are positioned to continue evaluation and sustain program growth beyond the grant lifecycle?

Comments:			
_ Excellent <small>(15)</small>	_ Good <small>(12)</small>	_ Acceptable <small>(9)</small>	_ Not Acceptable ₍₆₎
Individual Reviewer Worksheet 2012 Social Innovation Fund Grant Competition Program Review			
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy: Budget Justification To what extent does the applicant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Propose a reasonable and justifiable budget that will support the capacity necessary to achieve desired outputs and outcomes? ◆ Present a budget adequate to successfully support program activities, especially in regard to evaluation, supporting subgrantee program growth, and running a successful subgrantee selection process? ◆ If applicable, provide a compelling case for proposing higher program costs due to an intention to make subgrants in areas that are significantly philanthropically underserved? 			
Description of Match Sources and Capacity To what extent does the applicant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Present a compelling plan for securing the total match commitment for their Social Innovation Fund program? ◆ Describe adequate plans or efforts to assist subgrantees to secure their required match? 			
Comments:			
_ Excellent <small>(15)</small>	_ Good <small>(12)</small>	_ Acceptable <small>(9)</small>	_ Not Acceptable ₍₆₎
Total Score: __ of 70			
APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY After the panel discussion and finalizing your assessment: provide a summary of your review that captures the strengths and weaknesses of the application that had the greatest impact on your assessment. This summary, which will be provided to the applicant in the Feedback Summary Report and may be posted on CNCS' website, must be supported by your ratings and comments in the previous sections.			
Applicant Feedback Summary Comments:			

APPENDIX D –INDIVIDUAL REVIEWER WORKSHEET

PROGRAM REVIEW (Sample)

Individual Reviewer Worksheet 2012 Social Innovation Fund Grant Competition Program Review

Assess the extent to which the applicant addresses each of the elements of the application. Select a Rating for each element; providing comments for each Rating. All comments should address the significant strengths and weaknesses identified in your assessment that justify your selected Rating.

Goals and Objectives

To what extent did the applicant:

- ◆ Clearly identify the target community or geographies that they will serve and the target issue(s) their programming will focus on?
- ◆ Make a persuasive case using statistical information for the need related to the issue area(s) identified in the target geographical area(s) listed?
- ◆ Clearly identify specific measurable outcomes that will be achieved through their proposed program?
- ◆ Make a compelling case for their ability to successfully support the focus, goals, and approach they propose?
- ◆ Provide a clear, logical theory of change that outlines their investment approach and proposed outcomes?
- ◆ Identify the value-added activities, including technical assistance or other services, that will be offered to subgrantees to support their success in achieving these outcomes?

Comments:

The applicant identifies and convincingly describes extensive neglect and consequent need for civic, social and philanthropic investment in one of City X's most disadvantaged neighborhoods. By targeting their SIF on a 2.25 square mile area of the city, the applicant will concentrate resources, and raise the level of impact.

The applicant persuasively documents the community need with data on educational underachievement, social dysfunction, family breakdown, compromised health and educational underachievement.

Although the applicant provides 5 specific outcomes that have measures attached to them, it is unclear from the proposed theory of change how the design would support attaining these outcomes. Little to no details were provided. For example, Outcome #4 states that "100% of families of enrolled youth will receive intensive support" yet there are no details provided to determine if this is a realistic measure for the objective, what types of intensive support would be received, or how receipt of intensive support would directly contribute to their overall goal of improving youth educational success within the identified geographic area.

The applicant describes a track record of providing grants supporting the types of programs they intend to fund with the SIF. However, their investment history is weak as they have only piloted this type of investment in the past year and a half and, as such, they do not yet have data nor are able to provide specific examples of positive outcomes from their current portfolio to support the efficacy of their approach.

The applicant includes a theory of change and identified 5 specific outcomes they will work towards. However, the outcomes don't logically flow from their theory of change. For example, they propose investing specifically in adolescent youth subgrantee programs but their outcome measures seem to focus a great deal on families. Because some of the youth they claim to want to target are already emancipated, it is not clear how their interventions will connect or have effect on families.

The support for subgrantees that will be offered to ensure fiscal and programmatic compliance is comprehensive. However, the application doesn't explain the specific capacity building technical assistance that will be offered to build capacity to carry out the program and achieve the identified outcomes.

___ Excellent (10)

_ Good (8)

X Acceptable (6)

_ Not Acceptable (4)

Description of Activities: Subgrantee Selection

To what extent did the applicant:

- ◆ Provide a clear profile of the type of subgrantee organization they hope to fund?
- ◆ Provide a clear and comprehensive plan for carrying out a competitive subgrantee selection process?
- ◆ Present a selection process that has a high likelihood of successfully identifying subgrantees that meet the Social Innovation Fund's requirements of having at least preliminary evidence of effectiveness, and are positioned to conduct evaluations that would achieve moderate or strong levels of evidence over a three to five year period?
- ◆ Provide a clear articulation of how they will assess applicants for readiness and capacity to implement program growth as a part of their participation in the Social Innovation Fund?
- ◆ Adequately propose a means of allocating grant awards so that larger sums are given to those subgrantees with higher levels of evidence of effectiveness to support the growth of their program impact?

Comments:

Besides planning to conduct a well-publicized, comprehensive RFP process, the applicant strengthens the proposed subgrantee selection process by providing evidence of extensive knowledge about local, capable providers and cites several felt to be exemplary in the region. This demonstrated they had developed a profile of the subgrantee program they hope to fund. It also suggests the applicant will look broadly for subgrantees while utilizing its knowledge of proven strong agencies in the region.

The applicant lists a strong slate of staff, advisors, and board members with evaluation expertise that will assist in determining if subgrantees meet the evidence requirements. This engagement should ensure success in selecting subgrantees with the evaluation capacity to design and implement a moderate-level design.

The applicant describes a proprietary rubric they will use to measure 7 characteristics they have found to be essential for successful scaling. Their description of this rubric and how it will be applied provides a clear articulation of how they will assess applicants' readiness for growth.

The applicant makes no mention of how grant award sums will be evaluated or assigned and it does not propose to offer priority or larger award amounts to those with higher levels of evidence.

_ Excellent (10)

X Good (8)

_ Acceptable (6)

_ Not Acceptable (4)

Description of Activities: Proposal for Growing Subgrantee Impact

To what extent did the applicant:

- ◆ Articulate their theory or approach to growing effective subgrantee program models in alignment with their overall theory of change?

- ◆ Provide an appropriate list of characteristics the applicant will use to assess subgrantee capacity for growth?
- ◆ Include a description of how evidence of effectiveness will be used to determine when or how a program is well-situated for growth?
- ◆ Describe their means of supporting subgrantee growth through technical assistance or other resources?

Comments:

Also mentioned in their selection process, the applicant has a tested rubric of 7 measures that they believe leads to effective program scaling. This is in alignment with their theory of building local capacity within their targeted geography and their end goal of achieving stronger adolescent youth academic success through increased subgrantee capacity.

The rubric cited does not take evidence of effectiveness or evaluation results into account and this is not addressed elsewhere in this section. Therefore it seems the applicant is nonresponsive on this particular criterion.

The applicant describes a series of trainings and resources that they have developed in coordination with their 7 measure rubric that will support subgrantees in achieving growth goals. These range from leadership training to fiscal capacity building and seem adequate depending on the type of subgrantee that they select.

_ Excellent ₍₁₀₎_ Good ₍₈₎X Acceptable ₍₆₎_ Not Acceptable₍₄₎**Organizational Capacity: History of Competitive Subgranting**

To what extent does the applicant:

- ◆ Have demonstrated experience selecting and awarding competitive grants to nonprofits?
- ◆ Demonstrate capacity to undertake the subgrant selection process outlined in their application?

Organizational Capacity: Experience Growing Program Impact

To what extent does the applicant:

- ◆ Describe adequate examples of past efforts supporting grantee program growth through replication or expansion?
- ◆ Describe adequate resources to support successful subgrantee growth as proposed?
- ◆ Propose how best practices will be captured and shared, preferably based on successful past efforts?

Comments:

The applicant has ten years history of making grants in the region and has piloted the proposed program during their last funding cycle. The staffing and advisory structure and grant management software system is more than adequate to support the process they propose.

The technical assistance they propose to implement to support subgrantee growth is supported by both internal staff and contracted experts. The examples they provide from their previous portfolios suggests their approach works, though outcomes from their last round of grants are still not available.

While a learning community is mentioned and the applicant emphasizes building community within its small geographic footprint, they do not explicitly identify how they will capture and share best practices among their portfolio.

_ Excellent ₍₁₀₎	_ Good ₍₈₎	X Acceptable ₍₆₎	_ Not Acceptable ₍₄₎
Organizational Capacity: Ability to Provide Program Support and Oversight To what extent does the applicant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Describe compelling examples of setting and implementing goals with grantees? ◆ Present a qualified roster of staff members that have the experience and capacity to effectively implement the proposed program? This includes the involvement of management, board members, etc. ◆ Present a compelling plan to provide assistance or support to build subgrantee capacity as needed? ◆ Describe experience operating and overseeing programs comparable to the ones proposed in the identified priority issue area(s) of activity, including specific examples of prior accomplishments and outcomes in these area(s)? ◆ Describe a plan for developing subgrantee performance measurement systems and using these to improve subgrantee performance? ◆ Describe experience monitoring subgrantees for compliance against programmatic requirements? ◆ Describe a sufficient plan for subgrantee monitoring? ◆ Propose an approach to hold both subgrantees and themselves accountable for meeting program goals? 			
Organizational Capacity: Ability to Provide Financial Support and Oversight To what extent does the applicant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provide a compelling case that they have the experience and staff capacity to successfully manage the proposed Social Innovation Fund grant program at both the intermediary and subgrantee level from a fiscal perspective? ◆ Describe a staffing plan that engages staff members with sufficient capacity and experience to be effective and compliant? ◆ Describe sufficient plans for ensuring compliance with federal guidelines at the intermediary and subgrantee level? ◆ If the applicant is new to federal funding, do they provide adequate evidence that they have the means and plan to acquire necessary capacity to ensure compliance? 			
Organizational Capacity: Strategy for Sustainability To what extent does the applicant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provide a compelling statement of commitment to continue the Social Innovation Fund's investment priorities beyond the life of the grant? ◆ Describe a successful strategy for ensuring subgrantees are positioned to continue evaluation and sustain program growth beyond the grant lifecycle? 			
Comments: <p>The staffing structure for this program is robust including management, program implementation, fiscal and evaluation staff. The descriptions of the staff suggest that all are well-qualified to successfully complete the tasks assigned. Further, the advisors and board members who will be "volunteering" through the review process and through ongoing monitoring should be excellent sources of expertise.</p> <p>The applicant also distinguishes itself by concentrating on a defined geographic area avoiding a "go-it-alone" strategy by enlisting the Mayor, public agencies, civic and business leaders and other elected officials to pay attention to the identified neighborhood's challenges.</p>			

With experience managing other grants and good financial and administrative staff capacity, the applicant demonstrates the capacity to manage a federal grant of this size.

Based on their past grantmaking record and history of successful investment in this geographic location, the applicant provides a compelling statement of commitment to ensuring the success of their subgrantees during and after the program. It is not clear if this extends to a commitment to evaluation but there is evident concern and care regarding investment in the organizational capacity of their subgrantees.

_ Excellent (15)

X Good (12)

_ Acceptable (9)

_ Not Acceptable (6)

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy: Budget Justification

To what extent does the applicant:

- ◆ Propose a reasonable and justifiable budget that will support the capacity necessary to achieve desired outputs and outcomes?
- ◆ Present a budget adequate to successfully support program activities, especially in regard to evaluation, supporting subgrantee program growth, and running a successful subgrantee selection process?
- ◆ If applicable, provide a compelling case for proposing higher program costs due to an intention to make subgrants in areas that are significantly philanthropically underserved?

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy: Description of Match Sources and Capacity

To what extent does the applicant:

- ◆ Present a compelling plan for securing the total match commitment for their Social Innovation Fund program?
- ◆ Describe adequate plans or efforts to assist subgrantees to secure their required match?

Comments:

The budget proposed outlines key programmatic elements including staffing, contractors, training, investments in IT infrastructure, and the subgrants themselves. The evaluation costs seem relatively sparse and it isn't clear if subgrantees will be expected to shoulder some of these costs or not.

This applicant makes a compelling case for efficient investment in a smaller geographic location and lists several examples of efficiencies and/or cost savings that can be achieved through their investment approach. Certainly they should expect to achieve the proposed cost savings from running a locally-focused and based subgrant selection process.

The applicant has a demonstrated track record of raising funds from other foundations. So far, the match funding obligated does not represent a diversity of funding with only one other funder committed at the \$10,000 level besides the applicant itself.

The applicant does not make mention of efforts it will employ to assist with subgrantee fundraising other than the technical assistance for fiscal capacity it refers to and "building community with other civic leaders and investors." This does not seem like a strong plan.

_ Excellent (15)

_ Good (12)

X Acceptable (9)

_ Not Acceptable (6)

Total Score: 47_ of 70

APPLICANT FEEDBACK

This section will be provided to applicants as a summary of reviewer feedback on their overall application. Please summarize key strengths and weaknesses from each section. You may copy and paste comments from the sections above if appropriate.

Applicant Feedback Comments:

The proposed program benefits from a strong staffing structure, strong grantmaking history, a well-articulated subgrantee selection plan, deeply-focused investment strategy, and proprietary capacity building techniques. Weaknesses include a lack of clarity around the theory of change and identified outcomes, and omission of several requested details. Also, they do not provide sufficient information regarding their ability or efforts to raise either their own match or assist subgrantees in raising match once selected. Overall, however, this program stands a good chance for success.

APPENDIX E – INDIVIDUAL REVIEWER WORKSHEET

EVALUATION REVIEW

INDIVIDUAL REVIEWER WORKSHEET 2012 Social Innovation Fund Grant Competition EVALUATION REVIEW

Legal Applicant: _____ Application ID: _____

Reviewer Name: _____

Assess the extent to which the applicant addresses each of the elements of the application. Select a Rating for each element; provide comments for each Rating. All comments should address the significant strengths and weaknesses identified in your assessment that justify your Rating.

Description of Activities: Proposal for Evaluation

To what extent did the applicant:

- ◆ Describe anticipated program models that will be evaluated? Do these models have the potential to achieve at least moderate levels of evidence of effectiveness during their Social Innovation Fund grant period of three to five years?
- ◆ Explain how they will assess needs for and provide technical assistance to subgrantees as they design, implement, and monitor evaluations of their program models?
- ◆ If addressed, describe how they will work with an evaluation partner and what activities this partner will do to support the Social Innovation Fund portfolio?
- ◆ Describe an appropriate and detailed budget to support the cost of reasonable evaluation activities that will meet Social Innovation Fund evaluation requirements?

Comments:

_ Excellent (15)

_ Good (12)

_ Acceptable (9)

_ Not Acceptable (6)

Organizational Capacity: Evaluation Experience

To what extent does the applicant:

- ◆ Demonstrate experience in managing and supporting evaluations of program models they have funded in the past?
- ◆ Demonstrate the capacity to apply evidence/evaluation results to decision-making and investment strategies?
- ◆ Have experience influencing and supporting its grantees to use evidence to improve program performance?
- ◆ Demonstrate their staff's capacity (or contracted capacity) to ensure successful evaluation of their subgrantees' program models?

Comments:			
<input type="text"/> Excellent <small>(15)</small>	<input type="text"/> Good <small>(12)</small>	<input type="text"/> Acceptable <small>(9)</small>	<input type="text"/> Not Acceptable <small>(6)</small>
Total Score: <input type="text"/> of 30			
<p align="center">APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY</p> <p>After the panel discussion and finalizing your assessment: provide a summary of your review that captures the strengths and weaknesses of the application that had the greatest impact on your assessment. This summary, which will be provided to the applicant in the Feedback Summary Report and may be posted on CNCS' website, must be supported by your ratings and comments in the previous sections.</p>			
Applicant Feedback Summary Comments:			

APPENDIX F – INDIVIDUAL REVIEWER WORKSHEET

EVALUATION REVIEW (SAMPLE)

SAMPLE INDIVIDUAL REVIEWER WORKSHEET 2012 Social Innovation Fund Grant Competition EVALUATION REVIEW SAMPLE

Legal Applicant: Applicant X _____

Application ID: 12SIH123456

Reviewer Name: Jane Doe _____

Assess the extent to which the applicant addresses each of the elements of the application. Select a Rating for each element; providing comments for each Rating. All comments should address the significant strengths and weaknesses identified in your assessment that justify your selected Rating.

Description of Activities: Proposal for Evaluation

To what extent did the applicant:

- ◆ Describe anticipated program models that will be evaluated? Do these models have the potential to achieve at least moderate levels of evidence of effectiveness during their Social Innovation Fund grant period of three to five years?
- ◆ Describe an evaluation strategy that will ensure program models achieve at least moderate levels of evidence over their three to five year grant period?
- ◆ Explain how they will assess needs for and provide technical assistance to subgrantees as they design, implement, and monitor evaluations of their program models?
- ◆ If addressed, describe how they will work with an evaluation partner and what activities this partner will do to support the Social Innovation Fund portfolio?
- ◆ Describe an appropriate and detailed budget to support the cost of reasonable evaluation activities that will meet Social Innovation Fund evaluation requirements?

Comments:

- The applicant provides descriptions of the evidence that they will be using to select subgrantees and these directly correlate with the definitions in the NOFA. Because the applicant is stipulating that subgrantees must come in prepared to participate in a shared “moderate” level of evidence at the macro-level/overall evaluation (i.e., evidence is quasi-experimental in design, with the use of imprecise (i.e., not treatment specific) school-level data, matching the project “schools” with other schools not involved in/supported by the project), it can be concluded that they will have potential to reach at least moderate over the three to five year plan.
- It appears that the applicant is gathering “moderate” level of evidence from subgrantee evaluations. Specifically, they are deploying a quasi-experimental design of pretest/posttest, and incorporating shared metrics (i.e., psychometrically validated scales that will be used by multiple subgrantees), and therefore will have a good/high sample size. The sampling plan is opportunistic, and the design only meets the minimum threshold for external generalizability (i.e., pretest/ posttest). But, the design’s use of shared metrics, as well as triangulated data sources, across subgrantees, will provide a rich enough dataset that one can claim more than just having “internal generalizability,” and in fact the cause-and-effect findings can and should inform other external audiences’ work in youth development.
- The applicant does not address how they will assess the needs of each subgrantee in terms of implementing the proposed evaluation strategy. They provide examples of evaluation technical assistance they have provided before, but don’t explain how they might address the diversity of

evaluation capacity their portfolio might demonstrate.

- In terms of monitoring, the applicant provides only “satisfactory” evidence of supporting the systems and tools that subgrantees will need to participate and engage in the evaluation efforts for the purposes of replication. They do a good job of stating that training on the ABC Data System, how to access and use the data will be provided. But, it is important to note that ABC Data System is for community-level data, not the shorter-term metrics that will also be utilized. It appears that the near-term measurement of outcomes, as well as tracking systems, etc., will be driven by the evaluation team. This does not engage subgrantees in anything more than complying with the evaluation tools and process. To really support program improvement via systems and tools, the evaluation team will need to provide technologies, dashboards, etc. that subgrantee organizations can use, independently, while also in service to the overall evaluation. These are not mentions, explicitly, for subgrantees.
- The applicant identified EvalPros as their evaluation partner and describes their 10 year track record of working together to implement grantee evaluations. However, the applicant does not clearly delineate what role EvalPros will play in terms of evaluation implementation – if they will merely be advisors or will be contracted to design and implement the evaluation itself.
- The applicant has budgeted \$75K per year for the intermediary-led evaluation and includes two part-time staff to operationalize the strategy. Considering the range of subgrantees they expect (8 to 14) and the level of rigor they expect to achieve (moderate using a QED design), this budget does not seem adequate. For example, they do not seem to include money for comparison site data gathering. Also, it is not clear as to whether the trainings and software licenses they will provide on the ABC Data System are included in this budget or not.

_ Excellent (15)

_ Good (12)

X Acceptable (9)

_ Not Acceptable (10)

Organizational Capacity: Evaluation Experience

To what extent does the applicant:

- ◆ Demonstrate experience in managing and supporting evaluations of program models they have funded in the past?
- ◆ Demonstrate the capacity to apply evidence/evaluation results to decision-making and investment strategies?
- ◆ Have experience influencing and supporting its grantees to use evidence to improve program performance?
- ◆ Demonstrate their staff's capacity (or contracted capacity) to ensure successful evaluation of their subgrantees' program models?

Comments:

- The applicant cites three strong examples of past evaluations they have implemented including an implementation study, an RCT, and a QED evaluation, all of which focus on similar metrics or outcomes as the ones they are proposing for their SIF program. This suggests they are well-experienced in managing the type of evaluation proposed.
- The applicant provides clear evidence of their use of evaluations in past investments, including citing almost 10 years of engaging with an external evaluation firm (EvalPros) to work with the applicant and their grantees for designing and implementing evaluations. This work included developing shared metrics, logic models, training and technical assistance provision for evaluation, and data analytics and translational support. They also communicate a history of working with accessing and leveraging community data (e.g., via the ABC Data System for the purposes of informing program design, as well as monitoring and evaluating success at the community indicator level.
- The applicant presents clear evidence that past evaluations have, overarchingly, driven program improvements. For example, there are a number of citations of relevant evaluation projects where evaluation findings that determined statistically significant differences between comparison groups

(including pretest/posttest) led to improvements in program designs, collaborative efforts and even leader/stakeholder behavior. Another way in which they clearly indicate knowledge of how to use evidence to drive program improvements is through their thoughtful discussion of the importance of measuring short-term and interim outcomes along the path (Theory of Change) toward the longer-term outcomes of college readiness, etc. Their choice to use more direct outcomes like attendance, behavioral problems and grades, and their arguments as to why, indicate they are clear on the importance of understanding not just whether outcomes get accomplished, but the importance of analyzing for cause-and-effect in service to program improvement.

- The staff descriptions they provide suggest that the Director of Evaluation has sufficient experience in impact evaluations to manage an evaluation as proposed. As stated above, it is not clear, however, which roles the staff will play and which roles the EvalPros team will play. The applicant failed to identify who is ultimately responsible for implementing the evaluation design.

X Excellent (15)

_ Good (12)

_ Acceptable (9)

_ Not Acceptable (10)

Total Score: 24 of 30

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

This section will be provided to applicants as a summary of reviewer feedback on their overall application. Please summarize key strengths and weaknesses from each section. You may copy and paste comments from the sections above if appropriate.

Applicant Feedback Summary Comments:

Overall the applicant proposes a strong evaluation plan that will meet the SIF requirements of at least moderate levels of evidence. They clearly outline the level of evidence that subgrantees will be evaluated for during selection, describe a single QED evaluation design which meets the moderate definition, and describe elements of the design that they have in place (i.e. data collection systems, sampling design, etc.) that suggest it will be successful. The applicant also describes a strong partnership with EvalPros with which they have 10 years of evaluation experience and have successfully implemented several evaluation designs in the past.

However, the applicant does not adequately describe how they will assess subgrantee's evaluation needs in terms of technical assistance and leaves out several important details in terms of how subgrantees will be monitored as the evaluation goes forward. They also propose a budget that seems inadequate to meet the evaluation requirement and leaves out key elements like comparison site data gathering or software investments. It is also not clear how they will engage with their partners, EvalPro, and how they will utilize their own staff evaluation team.

APPENDIX G – INDIVIDUAL REVIEWER RUBRIC

CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE 2012 SOCIAL INNOVATION FUND GRANT COMPETITION

Rating Descriptions

Below are descriptions for each rating, accompanied by characteristics of an application that would fall within that particular rating. Decide which rating description you believe is the **best overall fit** in characterizing how the application addresses the criteria you are assessing.

Excellent — Many significant and minor strengths identified. Only minor weaknesses identified, if any. Highest probability and confidence that the requirements will be met and exceeded.

- ◆ Goes beyond what was requested, showing that the applicant has anticipated issues that may arise.
- ◆ Provides a thorough, detailed response to all of the information requested.
- ◆ Provides a clear and highly compelling description of how the proposed activities will achieve the anticipated results.
- ◆ Supports ideas and objectives with comprehensive plans explaining and connecting ideas to objectives.

Good — Several significant and minor strengths. No more than a few minor weaknesses and no significant weaknesses identified. High probability and confidence that the requirements will be met, and with some requirements exceeded.

- ◆ Provides a response to all of the information requested.
- ◆ Provides a realistic description of how the proposed activities will achieve the anticipated results.
- ◆ Explains most assumptions and reasons.
- ◆ Supports ideas with plans, examples, or outlines.

Acceptable — Few if any significant strengths. A few minor strengths, no more than a couple minor weaknesses and no significant weaknesses identified. Reasonable probability that the requirements will be met.

- ◆ Covers most of the information requested, with a few exceptions.
- ◆ Is sometimes unclear how the proposed activities will achieve the anticipated results.
- ◆ Makes some assumptions and leaves some reasons unexplained.

Not Acceptable – No significant strengths; few or no minor strengths and many minor and significant weaknesses identified. Extremely low probability that the requirements will be met.

- ◆ Gives an unclear description of how the proposed activities will achieve the anticipated results.
- ◆ Tends to “parrot” back the question, rather than answer and explain it
- ◆ Does not address or respond to the requirements/conditions of the *Notice*.
- ◆ Proposes activities that are not consistent with the *Notice*.
- ◆ Does not provide one or more key pieces of requested information.

Rating chart on next page

Rating Values

Based upon your assessment of which rating descriptions are the best overall fit, you will assign the following rating points (Note: the points are pre-weighted to reflect the weights assigned by the Corporation in the *Notice*).

	Excellent	Good	Acceptable	Not Acceptable
PROGRAM DESIGN (45%)				
A. Goals and Objectives	10	8	6	4
B. Description of Activities	10	8	6	4
• Subgrantee Selection				
• Proposal for Evaluation	15	12	9	6
• Proposal for Growing Subgrantee Impact	10	8	6	4
ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITY (40%)				
a. History of Competitive Granting	10	8	6	4
b. Experience Growing Program Impact				
c. Evaluation Experience	15	12	9	6
d. Ability to Provide Program Support and Oversight				
e. Ability to Provide Financial Support and Oversight	15	12	9	6
f. Strategy for Sustainability				
COST EFFECTIVENESS AND BUDGET ADEQUACY (15%)				
a. Budget Justification				
b. Description of Match Sources and Capacity	15	12	9	6
Totals	100	80	60	40

Total possible Program Review Points: 70 points

Total possible Evaluation Review Points: 30 points

APPENDIX H – WRITING MEANINGFUL COMMENTS: GUIDANCE AND EXAMPLES AND SENTENCE STARTERS

Standards for a High-Quality IRW

The comments from your Individual Review Worksheet will serve as the basis of the panel discussion, serve as the documentation of your assessment, and are provided to the applicant as feedback from the external review process. The comments may also be released to the public in response to official Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. The completeness and quality of these comments, as well as the alignment between your Ratings and comments are extremely important. As such, they must be appropriate, useful, and clearly correspond with the Selection Criteria that External Reviewers were asked to assess. Provided below is guidance on *writing meaningful comments*; as well as some example *sentence starters* to start you in the right direction with constructing helpful comments.

Writing Meaningful Comments

- ◆ Limit your assessment to information that was found in the reviewed application. *Do not include information from outside sources, the applicant's known reputation; or compare the application to another applicant, etc.*
- ◆ Present evaluative language instead of a summary of details from the application. *Tell what you thought about the proposal, give your assessment of what is strong or weak about the application, how does this detail make it strong, how well did the information that the applicant included respond to the selection criteria?*
- ◆ Phrase deficiencies in the application appropriately
 - *Avoid making suggestions for improvement, resist the urge to tell the applicant what would have made the proposal better. Rather phrase what was lacking, and how this lacking affected the proposal.*
- ◆ No inflammatory or inappropriate statements
Exercise care in how you articulate your assessment. Do not ask questions in your comments, avoid harsh tones, or overly broad statements. Do not refer to the "grant writer" for the application, etc.
Examples:
 - Why did the applicant not respond to the majority of the Criteria?*
 - The training plan was virtually non-existent.*
 - The applicant never clearly stated who the target population was!*
 - The grant writer was slick and creative, but there was little substance to the proposal.*
- ◆ Sentences are complete, with correct grammar and spelling.
Use spell check, and reread the assessment after you have completed it to ensure that it is clear and well written.
- ◆ Comments address the SIF Selection Criteria only, and do not comment on random aspects of the proposal.
- ◆ Comments should be limited to the strengths and weaknesses of the application, and should utilize the indicators (+) (-) for clarity. Take care to ensure that the strengths and weaknesses do not contradict each other. If there are strong and weak aspects of a Criterion that you would like to comment on, phrase the comment appropriately.

ie. (+/-) While the applicants proposed a comprehensive training plan to engage subapplicants and create a focused service experience, the proposed leader of these activities was one of the subgrantees, about whom there was little evidence of their qualifications.

- ◆ The selected Rating should align with the comments provided for each section.
- ◆ Applicant Feedback Summary contains balanced appropriate feedback. Summary comments should be placed in this section—the comments should not be brand new, but should be the Strengths and Weaknesses from previous Criteria that had the greatest weight on the overall assessment and Rating.

Characteristics of High Quality Comments

- ◆ Keep comments focused on significant strengths and weaknesses.(that have an impact on the selected Rating)
 - A strength becomes significant when it shows that the applicant has clearly demonstrated both an understanding of, and the ability to address, a key issue in program implementation or management.
 - A weakness becomes significant when a criterion is not addressed at all, or is addressed poorly causing concern about the applicant's ability to successfully implement the proposed project.
- ◆ Significant strengths and weaknesses must relate to the Selection Criteria as specified in the *Notice* and described in the IRW Guidance Document.
- ◆ The difference is clear between comments based on fact and those based on professional judgment. (Both are helpful, but the distinction is necessary.)
- ◆ Comments include evidence or an evaluation, rather than a reiteration or summary of what is in the application.
- ◆ The “so what” question is answered.

Characteristics of Low Quality Comments

- ◆ There is little or no relevant information to connect the statement to a particular application. The comment is generic and can be read to apply to any application.
- ◆ Comment includes a large portion of information that was copied directly from the application.
- ◆ There is little or no relevant information to indicate overall quality of the section.
- ◆ The sentence is long and confusing, so that the assessment is altogether unclear.
- ◆ There is little documentation or no evidence provided about what was strong/weak, or how it was good/bad.
- ◆ Comments are ambiguous and not clearly related to the Selection Criteria.
- ◆ Comments contain judgments that are outside the scope of responsibility of the Reviewer (for example, commenting that the applicant has received more than its fair share of funding).
- ◆ Comments contain questions, page numbers, suggestions or recommendations for improvements.
- ◆ Comments are facetious, pejorative, or otherwise inappropriate or unprofessional.

Sentence Starters

The sentence starters below may be useful in forming constructive review comments in the Individual Reviewer Worksheets. Keep in mind that the Sentence Starters are not exclusive statements, and that CNCS is neither prescribing them nor limiting you to their use. The purpose is to provide you with resources to help you succeed in your review.

Problem(s) identified

1. Community needs to be addressed are compelling and well-documented/missing... as evidenced by the following...
2. The target community (does not) appears to have been effectively involved in planning (or implementing) the program in the following way/because...
3. Proposed activities (do not) address the identified needs...to support their assertion that...
4. The applicant demonstrates previous relevant success as evidenced by.../The applicant does not make the case that they have been successful ...
5. The applicant presents limited information about the need to be addressed...they propose to...but the need was not substantiated because...
6. The applicant presents a clear and feasible/an ambiguous...

Anticipated outcome(s)

1. The applicant has a realistic plan for building the capacity/does not present a plan of the organization and the community to sustain the proposed service activities after the grant ends. Key features of this plan are...
2. The absence of information on... makes it difficult to assess the impact of the program in ...
3. The potential impact of the program on the community is well-demonstrated in the inclusive...
4. The applicant presents a plan to sustain the proposed service activities in the community after the grant ends. Key features of this plan are...
5. This applicant supported the claim that they are likely to be successful through...
6. The activities proposed reflect a comprehensive model that...
7. Though the applicant has an innovative approach to...they are lacking...
8. The applicant meets minimal standards in their response, as it was lacking...

Solution(s) that will be carried out by ...

1. The plan supports/does not appear to support the program objectives because...
2. The applicant proposes a program that seems to be a sustainable endeavor as evidenced by...
3. The applicant presents a satisfactory approach to enhance the capacity of key local organizations to ... These partnerships include the following ... who will be involved in the following ways/roles...
4. The applicant has a realistic plan for building the capacity/does not present a plan to build the capacity of other organizations...
5. The applicant has built/does not make the case to have built partnerships with the community groups and residents who will be essential to the success of the applicant activities. For example...The applicant details a rigorous process for subgrantee selection, including ...
6. The applicant provides a clear detailed plan for providing technical assistance to subgrantees as evidenced by ...
7. The applicant demonstrates strong internal capacity to provide oversight based on their track record of
8. The applicant has developed a strong partnership with ...clearly demonstrated with ...
9. The applicant does not clearly detail or outline the extent to which ... as evidenced by ...
10. Although the applicant states they plan to support and monitor their subgrantees ...
11. Although the applicant identifies goals/issue areas/outcomes, they do not explain...

APPENDIX I –PANEL DISCUSSION REPORT (PDR)

PANEL DISCUSSION REPORT 2012 Social Innovation Fund Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: _____ Application ID: _____

Panel Coordinator Name: _____ Panel #: _____

Panel Coordinator: Please document the discussion points from the panel for this application. Take note of the relevant Selection Criteria that were considered during the panel discussion, and chronicle the points of agreement and disagreement. Please include your observations of any anomalies, or concerns from the panel discussion that you would like to raise for the attention of CNCS Staff.

Panel Discussion should revolve around the following Selection Criteria to determine the applicant's quality of response:

Program Review

- ◆ Goals and Objectives
- ◆ Description of Activities
 - Subgrantee Selection
 - Proposal for Growing Subgrantee Impact
- ◆ Organizational Capacity
 - History of Competitive Subgranting
 - Experience Growing Program Impact
 - Ability to Provide Program Support and Oversight
 - Ability to Provide Financial Support and Oversight
 - Strategy for Sustainability
- ◆ Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy
 - Budget Justification
 - Description of Match Sources and Capacity

Or

Evaluation Review

- ◆ Description of Activities
 - Proposal for Evaluation
- ◆ Organizational Capacity
 - Evaluation Experience

Areas of Agreement:

Areas of Disagreement:

Other Points Covered During the Discussion:

Observations from Panel Coordinator on Discussion:

APPENDIX J –PANEL DISCUSSION REPORT (PDR)

PROGRAM REVIEW (SAMPLE)

Panel Coordinator: Please document the discussion points from the panel for this application. Take note of the relevant Selection Criteria that were considered during the panel discussion, and chronicle the points of agreement and disagreement. Please include your observations of any anomalies, or concerns from the panel discussion that you would like to raise for the attention of CNCS Staff.

Panel Discussion should revolve around the following Selection Criteria to determine the applicant's quality of response:

Program Review

- ◆ Goals and Objectives
- ◆ Description of Activities
 - Subgrantee Selection
 - Proposal for Growing Subgrantee Impact
- ◆ Organizational Capacity
 - History of Competitive Subgranting
 - Experience Growing Program Impact
 - Ability to Provide Program Support and Oversight
 - Ability to Provide Financial Support and Oversight
 - Strategy for Sustainability
- ◆ Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy
 - Budget Justification
 - Description of Match Sources and Capacity

Or

Evaluation Review

- ◆ Description of Activities
 - Proposal for Evaluation
- ◆ Organizational Capacity
- ◆ Evaluation Experiences

Areas of Agreement:

There was broad agreement among panelists on the application's overall quality.

Panelists all agreed the applicant's presentation of why. There was also agreement around the proposed xxx

Although specific reasons varied, individual panelists were largely in agreement about weaknesses in the proposed plan to xxx. There was agreement the proposed YY. But there was also agreement the ZZZ had to be considered a weakness.

Areas of Disagreement:

There were several differences among individual reviewers (greater than one rating level) while rating individual criteria.

Panel members agreed the evidence provided by the applicant tended to support xxx. However, some panel members asserted the lack of current data and the absence of specific information regarding YY. Other panel members did not think the issue was as critical (I).

Logically, the panel disagreement over ratings for Criteria B carried over to Criteria CC. There was substantial discussion over the issue of xx and whether or not the proposed xx activities would lead to the anticipated outcome. After considering the various views, most of the reviewers maintained their differing rating levels.

Other Points Covered during the Discussion:

Panel members engaged in an extended discussion on xx. The discussion was rich, but there was neither overwhelming agreement or disagreement on these items:

CC

DD

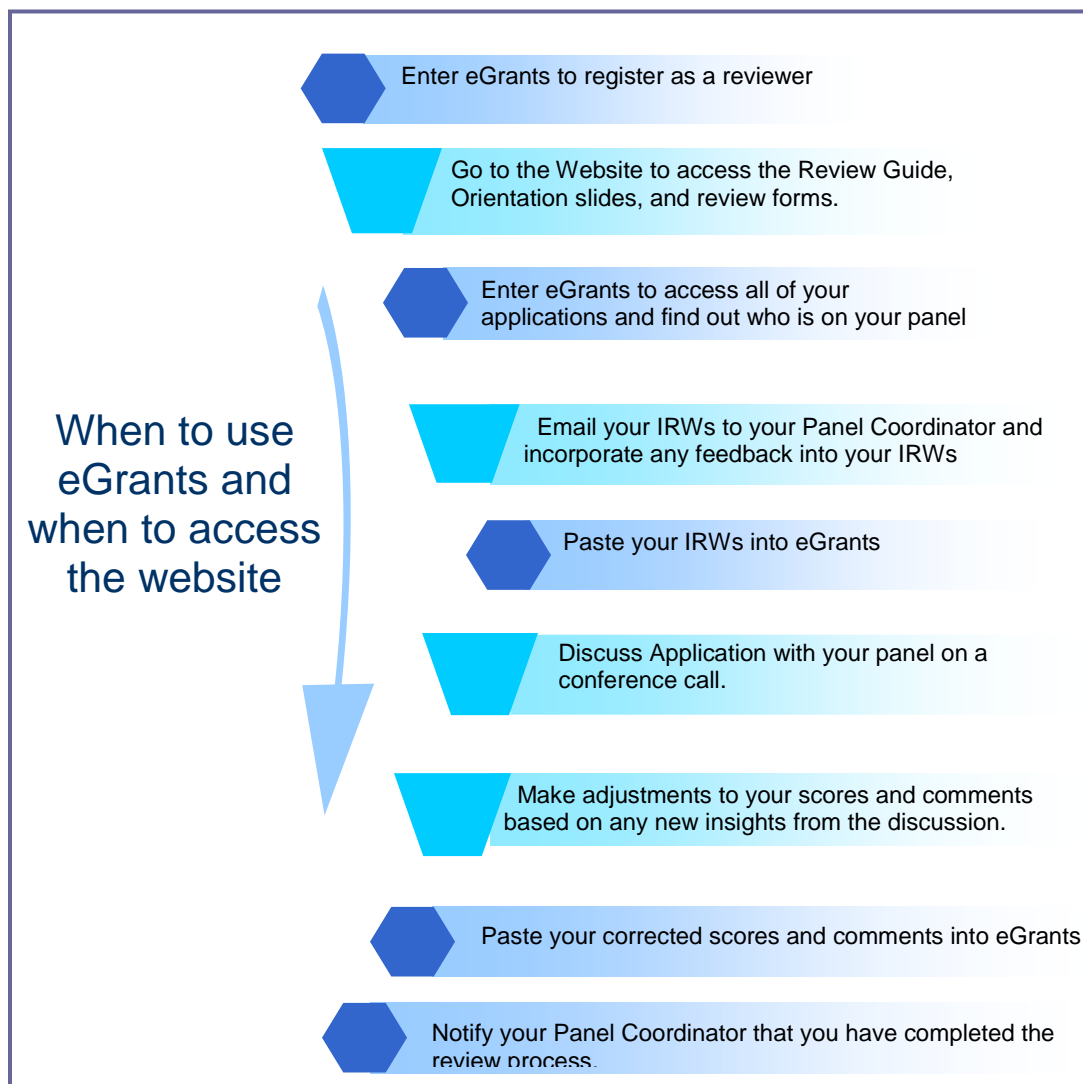
Observations from Panel Coordinator on the Discussion:

The discussion of this application was productive, thorough, and covered each of the XX selection criteria... Panelists did not always agree on each element but only in a few cases noted above did the ratings vary more than one level. No single panelist dominated the discussion and individual differences were thoroughly explored. In the end, panelists noted they would revise comments to provide clearer context about their ratings, but the majority of the initial rating determinations would be maintained.

APPENDIX K - INSTRUCTIONS FOR EGRANTS

Below are step-by-step instructions for using eGrants: (1) to access the applications assigned to your panel, and (2) to enter your Individual Reviewer Worksheet as you complete your review of each application, as well as (3) to enter and certify your Panel Consensus Summaries when your panel has concluded your review. The process includes the following steps: (1) Enter eGrants, (2) Obtain applications in eGrants, (3) Enter Individual Reviewers Worksheet in eGrants, (4) Review your Panel members' Individual Reviewer Worksheets.

The following graphic will help you understand the different ways that you will be using eGrants, on the one hand, and the website, on the other:

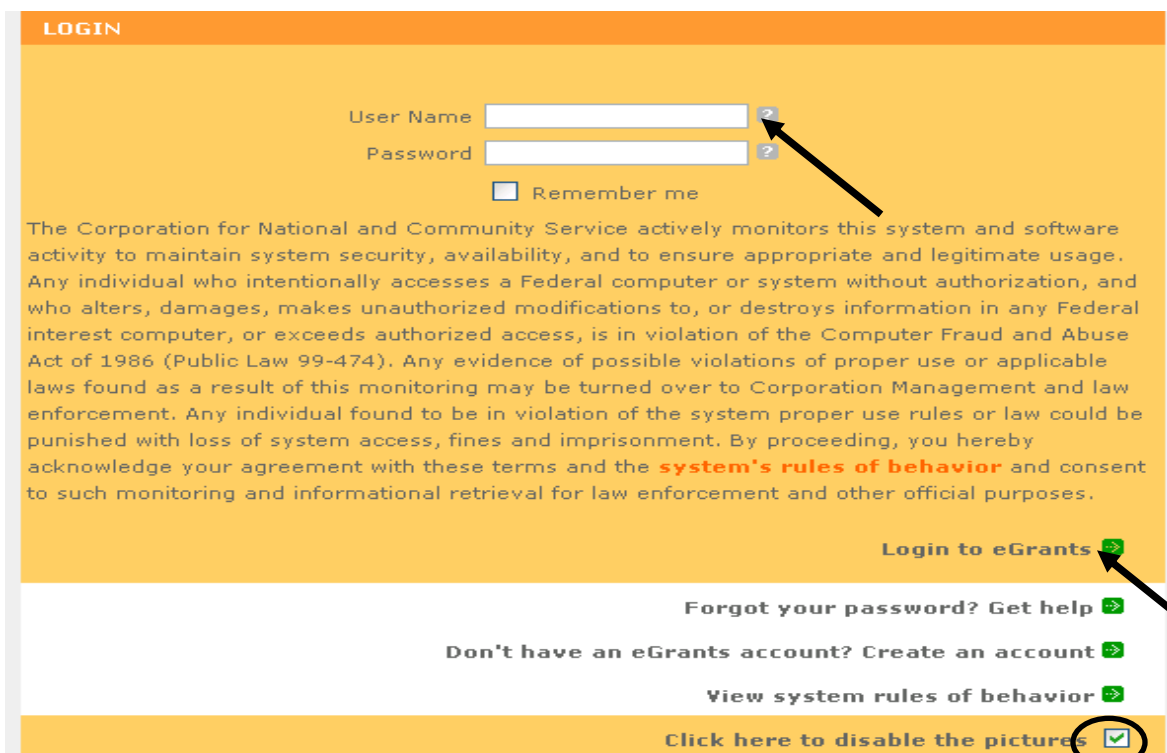


1. PROCEDURES

Step 1 – Enter eGrants

You should have an eGrants account and password prior to the start of the review. Go to CNCS's Web site, www.nationalservice.gov, click on the blue eGrants button, scroll down to the bottom of the page and click on *"Please click here to use eGrants"*. Type in your User Name, Password, and click on the 'Login to eGrants' link. If you are unable to enter eGrants, contact the National Service Hotline at <http://www.nationalservice.gov/questions/app/ask> or call 1-800-942-2677.

Check the *"Click here to disable the pictures"* box, to help open up your screens faster.



The screenshot shows the eGrants login interface. At the top is an orange header with the word "LOGIN" in white. Below this, there are two input fields: "User Name" and "Password", each followed by a small question mark icon. A "Remember me" checkbox is located below the password field. A large block of text provides a disclaimer about system security and user consent. Below the disclaimer, there are four links: "Login to eGrants", "Forgot your password? Get help", "Don't have an eGrants account? Create an account", and "View system rules of behavior". At the bottom, there is a link "Click here to disable the pictures" which is accompanied by a checked checkbox. Two black arrows point to the question mark icons next to the input fields and the "Login to eGrants" link. A black circle highlights the checkbox for "Click here to disable the pictures".

LOGIN

User Name

Password

☐ Remember me

The Corporation for National and Community Service actively monitors this system and software activity to maintain system security, availability, and to ensure appropriate and legitimate usage. Any individual who intentionally accesses a Federal computer or system without authorization, and who alters, damages, makes unauthorized modifications to, or destroys information in any Federal interest computer, or exceeds authorized access, is in violation of the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act of 1986 (Public Law 99-474). Any evidence of possible violations of proper use or applicable laws found as a result of this monitoring may be turned over to Corporation Management and law enforcement. Any individual found to be in violation of the system proper use rules or law could be punished with loss of system access, fines and imprisonment. By proceeding, you hereby acknowledge your agreement with these terms and the **system's rules of behavior** and consent to such monitoring and informational retrieval for law enforcement and other official purposes.

Login to eGrants

Forgot your password? Get help

Don't have an eGrants account? Create an account

View system rules of behavior

Click here to disable the pictures

Click on 'Current NOFA Review Panel' to find your assigned competition. Click on the "review individual" link when working on your Individual Reviewer Worksheets. You will only be entering "Review Individual" screens; you will not be using the "Consensus" screens.

SELECT A NOFA REVIEW PANEL TO EDIT	
Current NOFA Review Panel	
Social Innovation Fund FY 2012 (stg P1 pnl #1)	review individual
Previous NOFA Review Panel	
Social Innovation Fund FY 2010 (Panel #8)	

Step 2 – Obtain Applications

Click on the 'view/edit' link for the application you want to review (see screen shot on next page). Contact your GARP Liaison if this is a challenge.

An entire application consists of the following reports when compiled:

424 Face Sheet – PDF File

Budget Narrative – PDF File

To print each complete application, or to save each one to your computer, select one of the 2 reports in the list above, and click on the GO button beneath the report name. This will bring up a separate window using Acrobat Reader. You may save the application to your hard drive (if you have Acrobat Reader) or you may print it. To print, click on the Printer Icon on the Adobe screen toolbar. To save, click on the gray disk on the Adobe screen toolbar. Follow this procedure for each one of the two reports that compose a Social Innovation Fund application.

VIEW/ENTER REVIEWER COMMENTS AND SCORES

Social Innovation Fund FY 2012: Due Date - 03/27/2012

You are currently viewing **Ms. Femi Estrada-Petersen's** comments and scores.

Please select an application to view or to edit.

The Portsmouth Community Foundation - ID #11KC090000	none	view/edit
--	------	---------------------------

Run Reports

Select a Report

[GO](#)

Click on the 'Select a Report' box found on the bottom left of your screen.

You will need to run all three of the reports to review the application in its entirety.

If you are having difficulty running reports:

- ◆ Close out completely from eGrants
- ◆ Open up Adobe Acrobat Reader from your programs (there will be a blank screen)
- ◆ Leave Adobe Acrobat open
- ◆ Log into eGrants
- ◆ Run a report

Step 3 – Enter Individual Reviewer Worksheets in eGrants

Review each assigned application on your own, using the Individual Reviewer Worksheet (as a Word document first) to document your observations and assessment. In reviewing and assessing Social Innovation Fund applications, you are focusing on the whole application. Send your completed IRW to your Panel Coordinator, who will provide feedback on your form. After you make the necessary edits to your IRW, complete the Individual Reviewer Worksheet as a Word document; you will enter (copy and paste) your individual comments and ratings in eGrants.

Depending on whether you are in the Program Review or the Evaluation Review, you will be focusing on different elements of the Selection Criteria.

I. PROGRAM REVIEW (red arrows below)

PROGRAM DESIGN (30%)

- ◆ Goals and Objectives

- ◆ Description of Activities
 - Subgranting
 - Technical Assistance and Support

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITY (25%)

- ◆ Ability to Provide Program Oversight
- ◆ Ability to Provide Fiscal Oversight

COST EFFECTIVENESS AND BUDGET ADEQUACY (15%)

- ◆ Budget and Program Design

II. EVALUATION REVIEW (blue arrows below)

USE OF EVIDENCE (30%)

To enter your IRW into eGrants, click on the application that you are currently reviewing, e.g., *The Portsmouth Community Foundation*. The name and application ID of the application that you are currently reviewing will appear at the top of the screen (see below).

When you are pasting your IRWs into eGrants, you will see two sections of criteria for the application. Program Reviewers will enter their IRWs into section A (outlined in red below), and Evaluation Reviewers will enter their IRWs into section B (outlined in blue below). The review forms will mirror the Word version of the IRW that you have completed.

4/8/2011, 12:29 PM, EDT [home](#) [my account](#) [help](#) [logout](#)

Corporation for NATIONAL & COMMUNITY SERVICE

eGRANTS

Welcome Martin

Peer Review

Current Application
The Portsmouth Community Foundation

View All Applications

Current Reviewer
Martin Willie (facilitator)
[View Other Reviewers](#)

View Consensus Scores

Run Reports
> [Select a Report](#)

Conflict of Interest Form

VIEW/ENTER REVIEWER COMMENTS AND SCORES

Social Innovation Fund 2011: Due Date - 04/08/2011

The Portsmouth Community Foundation - ID #1151176224

[Go to Other Applications](#) [GO](#)

You are currently viewing Martin Willie (facilitator)'s categories and scores.

A. Program Review - Pts not entered	edit
I. Program Review - Program Design - Goals and Objectives - Pts not entered	edit
II. Program Review - Program Design - Subgranting - Pts not entered	edit
III. Program Review - Program Design - Technical Assistance and Support - Pts not entered	edit
IV. Program Review - Organizational Capacity - Pts not entered	edit
VI. Program Review - Cost Effectiveness & Budget Adequacy - Pts not entered	edit
VIII. Program Review - Applicant Feedback - Pts not entered	edit
B. Evaluation Review - Pts not entered	edit
I. Evaluation Review ? Evidence of Effectiveness - Pts not entered	edit
II. Evaluation Review ? Applicant Feedback - Pts not entered	edit
Overall Comments	edit

A. Program Review

B. Evaluation Review

(Please note Program Reviewers will only need to complete those elements under **A.** Evaluation Reviewers will only need to complete those elements under **B.**)

Click on the '[edit](#)' link on your screen for each section (see screen shot above). The '[edit](#)' link will take you to the screen where you paste in your responses from each section of your completed Individual Reviewer Worksheet (see screen shot on next page).

VIEW/ENTER REVIEWER COMMENTS AND SCORES	
Social Innovation Fund FY 2012: Due Date - 04/12/2012	
04/27/2012, 12:36 PM, EST	back save next
Peer Review	
Current Application	The Portsmouth Community Foundation - ID #11SI100000
The Portsmouth Community Foundation	<input type="text" value="Go to Other Applications"/> <input type="button" value="GO"/>
View All Applications	
Current Reviewer	
Ms. Femi Estrada-Petersen	<p>You are currently viewing Ms. Femi Estrada-Petersen's comments and scores.</p> <p>Program Design - View List of Questions</p> <p>Enter comments here: (Max 65535 chars)</p> <div><div></div></div>
<input type="text" value="GO"/>	
Run Reports	
Select a Report	
<input type="button" value="GO"/>	
Conflict of Interest Form	
	Enter Score - <input type="text"/> out of 10 Pts.
	Return to main comments page

[Note: Disregard the 'View List of Questions' link —it does not pertain to this review.]

Paste your Word document comments into the white box under 'Enter comments here' (see screen shot above). You will enter your individual rating as a score in the 'Enter Score' box on the bottom right corner; enter the exact number that is listed for that rating on your IRW rating section.

When finished pasting all categories and entering the rating/score, click on 'Save'.

Overall Comments

You do not have to enter anything into this box. Click on 'Save' and then click on 'Next.'

To review your next application, click on the '*Go to Other Applications*' box near the top of your screen (just under the application name in the screen shot on the previous page), select another application and click on GO and repeat the process.

Step 4 –

You may see names on this list that you do not recognize as panel members—these are typically Corporation Staff (your GARP Liaison and Program Officer Liaison).

To see all applications on your panel, click on '*View All Applications*' link on the top left side of initial IRW screens (see screen shot, p. H-5).

Copy and Paste Instructions

1. Type your information into the Word document.
2. To copy the information, you need to left-click and hold the mouse button and drag your cursor over the typed information and release, then right-click on the mouse and select "Copy" from the "Edit" pull down menu (or select the text and hit Control + C).
3. Open your eGrants window and
 - a. Click in the white field in eGrants where you want the information placed.
 - b. Press and hold down the "Control" key on your keyboard (bottom left button on your keyboard). While holding it down click on the letter "V" to paste the information (or right click on the mouse and select "Paste" from the "Edit" pull down menu).
4. Repeat these steps until all comments have been pasted into eGrants.

Things To Keep In Mind

Some applications are received by CNCS via paper and are entered into eGrants by Corporation staff. As a result, you should be aware of the following:

For those that submitted paper applications that exceed the required character limits, CNCS staff only enter text up to the character limits. Therefore, some narratives may end mid-thought.

Some applicants copy and paste their narratives from word-processing software into eGrants. This may cause some formatting discrepancies (e.g., a question mark instead of an apostrophe). Do not rate applicants down for these visual issues.

If a paper application is entered by a Corporation staff person, there will be a statement in the narrative indicating it was entered by Corporation staff. If you have a question about the application, contact your GARP Liaison so they can verify the information matches what was submitted on paper.

SELECT A NOFA REVIEW PANEL TO EDIT	
Current NOFA Review Panel	
 Social Innovation Fund FY 2012 (stg P1 pnl #1)	review individual
Previous NOFA Review Panel	
 Social Innovation Fund FY 2010 (Panel #8)	



THE REVIEW IS DONE!

For questions related to eGrants, contact your GARP Liaison (assigned once you receive your panel assignment), or the National Service Hotline at 800-942-2677 or <https://questions.nationalservice.gov/app/ask>).

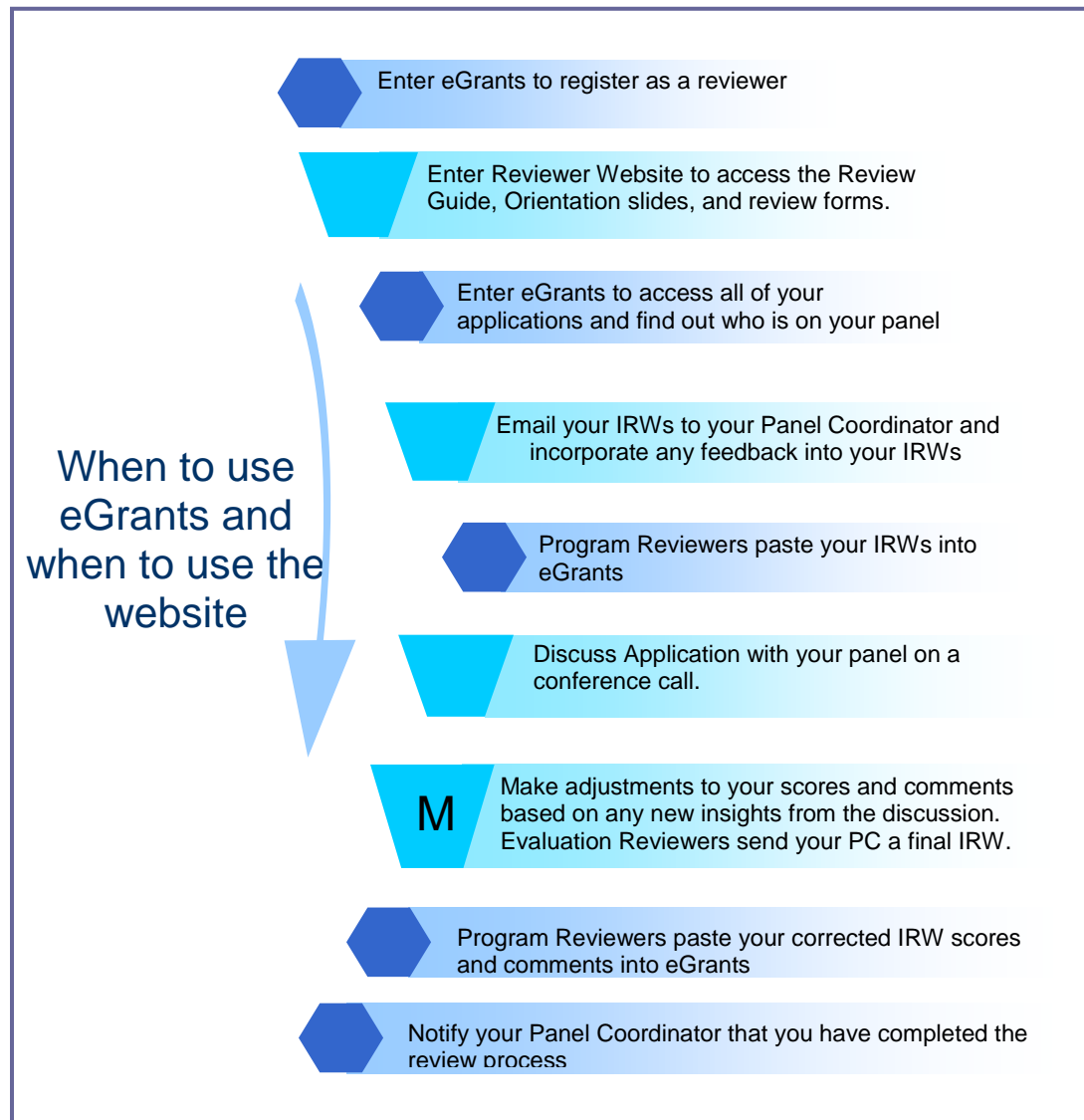
[Disregard the ‘*Evaluation*’ link in eGrants—it does not pertain to this review, your evaluation will be emailed to you upon completion of the review.]

APPENDIX L - SIF REVIEWER WEBSITE

Instructions for SIF Reviewer Website

Below are step-by-step instructions to access Review instructions, orientation materials, and forms you will need to complete the review. The process includes the following steps: Enter the website and Downloading all forms and instructions needed.

First, the following graphic will help you better understand the different ways that you will be using website in the grant review process, on the one hand, and eGrants, on the other:



Procedures

Place holder for the website instructions

The Web site for the 2012 Social Innovation Fund grant review is located at the link that was emailed to you announcing the review. Please visit the website to download all the instructions, training materials, and forms that will be used in this review. The website can be accessed by any internet connection. The website is meant for the exclusive use of the SIF Expert Reviewers and Panel Coordinators, please do not share any information from the website with anyone outside of the this review. By accepting the position of Expert Reviewer for SIF, you are agreeing to adhere to the confidentiality and discretion of this review.

If you are unable to enter the website, contact your GARP Liaison, or send an email to PeerReviewers@cns.gov.